

Dragons Bloodline volume 2

written by Yàn Māo

Translated by

[ziru](#)

Labyrinth City

In the end, they decided to stay a week in Ogre Village. Ria's wounds were healed, and they needed time for her to recover to proper form.

And Gig would be travelling together with the party. The Ogre King's farewell gift was a letter for an influential person in Labyrinth City, including a katana he'd gotten in the labyrinth to Ria.

"When I challenged it in my youth with five comrades, we were able to get through nine floors. The other five ended up dying."

He had no choice but to give up on advancing and went home with the equipment and treasure he'd gotten.

Still, it seems they'd identified the ninth floor's Lord, but even so judged that it was impossible.

"It was a hydra."

A thing said to defeat heroes. Still, that's only the ninth floor. Though it seems to end at the tenth floor, as for what's stronger than a hydra... only dragons come to mind.

Since we were able to learn various things, we unexpectedly spent a significant amount of time there.

The trip advanced smoothly. Even if monsters came out, mainly using Serge's magic, they were just delicious experience points.

Though Ria enjoyed herself with Matsukaze, Matsukaze could kill things with a hoof if it was just goblins.

"Matsukaze's level went up..."

Serge was probably surprised that a horse's level increased.

On the other side of the gently sloping hills, we saw Labyrinth City.

“Ooh~, so big~”

Serge uttered a voice of admiration. The population of Labyrinth City was approximately one hundred thousand. Half of them were explorers.

It had huge castle walls like Anise to stop outside invasions and was also prepared for monsters that overflow from the labyrinth. Though it seems that something like that has never actually happened yet.

When going inside you had to pay a toll of one silver coin per person. You could feel the confusion and fierce heat.

“Wow~, adventurers~”

Setting Serge aside, the tension was high. The party went to the address of the person they were referred to.

Heading towards the north side of town, the crowd gradually thinned. On the other hand, their attire became ordinary.

And buildings on the way were obviously extravagant. Arriving at the address, it was mansion that occupied the entire block.

“Gig’s Jii-chan has an amazing acquaintance~”

Although Labyrinth City was an independent city that didn’t belong to a country, the person the Ogre King introduced was someone called the mayor.

“I’m happy that Matsukaze will be carefree.”

Though Ria said something so easygoing, Carlos stood as the representative of cold sweat.

As a knight of a large country, it was easy to see the leader.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Klaus, working as the mayor of this town.”

“Knight of the Casalia Kingdom, first corps, Carlos Rushen.”

He turned his hand towards Ria behind him.

“I this is my reinforcement...”

“I’m Ryuke Riana Crystal Casalia. While in this town, I’ll be going as Riana Crystal.”

Klaus looked at her face for a moment.

“... Again with the jokes.”

“It is a capital crime to misrepresent yourself as Casalia royalty. Though it is so unreasonable it wouldn’t be believed, that’s how it is.”

Carlos said so expressionlessly.

Klaus turned towards Ria, blinked several times and began to speak. "Well well... During your stay, I'll have the privilege of giving the best hospitality."

"I'm grateful. Since we're planning on going into the labyrinth, I ask you to care for our horses in the meantime."

Klaus' face hardened in surprise.

"The... labyrinth?"

"Yeah. Our purpose in coming here is to train."

For the time being, Carlos and Gig were training in the garrison.

Lulu also went to serve as the one to give treatment. I was concerned that Carlos would get injured on purpose.

Ria and Serge set out to go sightseeing in the town together.

Serge said he wanted some kind of magic book, and Ria's goal was to look for a weapon.

"This really is fantasy huh. I didn't think there'd be a town in this rural area, I'm a bit impressed."

"Anise is more of a city. I'll show you around when we go back."

Chatting while shopping around, Serge obtained various magic books that he'd been looking for.

Though Ria didn't buy any katanas, she did buy some throwing daggers.

"As expected, there's no choice but to tell the process of making a Japanese sword to a dwarf huh?"

"Nee-chan, you know how to make Japanese swords?"

"Though I never did it myself, I know the method. Well, there'll probably be something lost in the process of me explaining it."

After that, Ria began to talk about how to make Japanese swords. Though he was a bit amazed, Serge chimed in some words.

They bought meat skewers at a street stall and ate while walking. The two people walked to the plaza eating festival nori, seeing it by

chance. [TN: Nori = Seaweed. No clue what festival nori is, though.]
“Geh.”

“A slave city? Though Casalia also has slavery, it was done diligently...”

Criminal slaves, meaning debt slaves, still had some human rights. Casalia was such a country.

However, the slaves in Shashmeer weren't treated like humans. They were treated like items.

Slaves covered in dust, covered in blood, dressed in scraps, were up on the stage.

For the two with modern Japanese values, it was hard to face.

“Is Casalia like this too?”

“No, Casalia diligently decides the prices of slaves. It doesn't do things like auctions, and they are paid salaries too. If they are badly injured, it would be treated like an injury generally would be.”

A manly battle slave. A seductive colored slave. Bids came in one after another.

“Nee-chan, let's go. This is in bad taste.”

“Yeah.”

Then, another slave was exhibited late.

“Okay, the next slave is a female cat beastkin, twelve years old. It has experience in the labyrinth, and is a bargain with its Fairy Eyes!”

Put onto the dais, the small cat beastkin was despondent.

Her whole body was covered with black hair. With golden eyes.

The auction began at twelve gold coins, immediately raising to fifteen.

Ah. That cat is-

“Sixteen!”

Among the men with deep voices, Ria’s voice resounded.

The crowd’s eyes gathered on her. While Ria stared directly at the slave, Serge was contrastingly frightened, saying “Awa awa”.

The black cat, it wasn’t something to own. It was an elegant, cunning, and fearless feral cat.

It was a cat with golden eyes and black fur.

In the end, Ria made the successful bid for the slave at twenty gold coins.

“Then, perform the slave contract.”

While rubbing his hands together, the merchant smiled.

With her entire attention, Ria observed the cat beastkin who’d become her slave.

Her fur was messy, and had a scar on one ear. Her eyes lacked strength, looking downwards. Her whiskers drooped.

“No, I’ll take her as is and go.”

“Huh? No, then there’s the danger of escaping...”

“It’s fine. Your name?”

For the first time, the cat beastkin looked up.

Though Serge couldn't tell the age of beastkin, he could still tell she was young.

Her expression was colored in puzzlement. For someone that was treated as a slave, her doubt was natural.

She said that she would take a slave without contracting it. If it's like that wouldn't it be able to run away?

"Your name. Do you understand me?"

She stretched out her hand, causing the beastkin to tremble. However, Ria's hand surprisingly just gently stroked her head.

She didn't mind the dirt nor the smell.

Before long, the beastkin raised her face and looked at Ria.

"Maal."

"I'm Ria. Pleased to meet you."

Serge heard it for the first time ever—Ria's most gentle voice.

The Six Explorers

“First thing is a bath.”

When Ria returned to the mansion she borrowed a bathroom and easily carried a barrel filled to the brim with water in by herself, filling the bathtub. Then by using fireball once, the water boiled in no time.

Closing the room, Ria energetically stripped.

Seizing Maal’s clothes who was darting her eyes about, she energetically stripped her as well.

“Awaawaawa-”

Warm water was thrown at the confused Maal.

“Cover your ears so water won’t get in.”

“O-okay.”

By using soap, Maal’s fur was evenly foamed up. Of course, her squishy paws were washed elaborately. [TN: Word for wash here also means investigate.]

When the pretty bubbles were cleaned off, she lifted her up from behind and entered the tub.

“Puhaah~, baths refresh the spirit!”

Saying that, Ria stroked Maal’s body, enjoying the short and soft fur.

“By the way, I’m going to capture the dungeon but...”

“Haaa.”

Maal was already relaxed.

“When my wish comes true, Maal will be freed. Even if it isn’t fulfilled, you can go anywhere you want after two years.”

Maal’s ear twitched.

A cat beastkin’s ear said things like a mouth.

“However, I want you to cooperate with me until then. Since this labyrinth lets just six people go in together, with this we have a complete set of people.”

“Haa...”

“Maal’s role is to be my comrade, and my hug pillow!”

Declaring that, Ria hugged the soft and exhausted body.

"I think we're good. Sneaking, keen ears, lock picking, she seems to have all of the skills necessary to be a scout."

Using Identify, Serge agreed from the start. Originally, this party didn't have someone in the scout position.

However, Lulu and Carlos objected negatively.

"You'd bring such a cute child into the labyrinth?"

"That's right. Such a small child should be a house maid."

The elf lover seemed to be a furry lover too. A sinful man.

Lulu removed the scar on Maal's ear and was already attached to her.

But in the end, they went with Ria's opinion. The Identify showed that Maal was level 20.

"Well then, we'll prepare our equipment tomorrow morning and leave for the labyrinth in the afternoon?"

It was decided.

That night, according to her declaration, Ria made Maal into her hug pillow.

She pulled Maal into the bed after she'd tried to reservedly lay on the floor. They were both in their underwear and Ria caressed the coat of fur.

"Why did Maal become a slave?"

When she asked while stroking her head, Maal's mouth opened lightly.

"I lived in a village to the south-east of here, but one day when I went to collect medicinal herbs, I was caught by slave hunters..."

It's tragic, but sad stories like that aren't uncommon in this area.

Maal had an ability called 'Fairy Eyes' that could see magic power, a convenient existence in the labyrinth. She was bought for a party of explorers, and went into the dungeon for two years.

Just recently, the party was defeated inside the dungeon and she

was sold to fix their equipment.

“Is that so? That’s serious. But don’t worry. I’m not in a situation where I’d have money problems.”

The fact that I’m staying at a mansion like this shows that.

“Come to think of it, Ria-sama...”

“Don’t use -sama. If you want to call me that, then by all means say ‘Ria-chan’.”

“Umm, what is Ria-chan’s situation?”

“You know the country to the south of here called Casalia?”

It’s a large country, so Maal knew the name.

“My father is the king.”

Tensely, Maal’s tail became stiff.

“Casalia is a good country. Though there are slaves, slave hunting is a crime. I’d like to show you it at least once...”

While patting her and saying so, Maal fell asleep.

It was the first peaceful sleep she’d had in a long time.

The next day, the party moved as scheduled. Serge, Lulu, and Carlos went out to buy supplies.

Serge’s storage space was convenient in that it didn’t let time pass. He could store enough fresh vegetables and meat to feed six people for months.

Facing Ria and Maal, Gig acted as a guard as Maal got necessary equipment for the labyrinth.

Maal wore matching black leather armor to Ria, two knives and a crossbow. She also had seven tools for opening treasure chests in the labyrinth.

“There aren’t any dangerous monsters until the fourth floor. Of course, that depends on your level.”

Now then, why else are we going into the labyrinth?

Instead of science in this world, magic supports life. Materials for magic tools, and their fuel, magic crystals.

The magic crystals are found in areas where there is an extremely large amount of magical power. Although you can refine the magic stones found from inside monsters, there are few monsters in the wild with them.

But labyrinths are different. Monsters grown there, without exception, have them.

In other words, labyrinths are areas where there are both dangerous monsters and magic stones are produced.

Moreover, for some reason labyrinths produce valuable ores, weapons and armor inside of treasure chests, and store magic tools.

Although it's said that the labyrinth's master lays them out, the labyrinth's master was called many things. A dragon, a fallen god, a fairy, it was extensive.

Each time you enter the structure completely changes and most haven't been traveled.

Again, Shashmeer's labyrinth's master was a mystery.

Thinking that it appeared a thousand years ago, perhaps it was the surviving demon, unexpectedly kind towards humans.

Anyway, you can't die.

Dying explorers would be robbed of all but their minimum equipment and teleported back to the surface.

Then, since magic power and life force are stolen, perhaps the treasures are produced here...

"And now, this is the Labyrinth Guild."

By Maal's guidance, the party went to the west side of town, the entrance to the labyrinth.

On the gently sloping hill, there was a gigantic gate. Next to it was a large building.

"Explorers must first register with the guild before going into the labyrinth. Magic stones obtained in the labyrinth, as well as raw monster materials and magic tools, are sold here."

“Ah~, this-is-a-ma-zi-ng~!”

Though only Serge openly showed his excitement, Ria and the other men were also restless.

Exploring labyrinths was a man's romance.

Opening the door to the building, the area was filled with the smell of sweat.

There were coarse men inside and the figure of a female explorer was rare. As expected, there were many warriors and few magicians.

From a inside the receptionist's counter came a voice from seeing Maal.

“Isn't it Maal. You were able to come back?”

They probably know her circumstances.

“Yes. This is my new master. Since we'll be going into the labyrinth, please register us.”

“Umm... I assume that the ogre, elf, and knight are fine but... two children?”

“Is there a problem?”

“There's no problem but...”

The receptionist saw Ria's figure, probably thinking she was an aristocrat.

It wasn't unusual for an aristocrat's child to admire heroes and recklessly challenge the labyrinth. Since there were no deaths in this labyrinth, it was suitable in that respect.

Without saying anything else in particular, the five people other than Maal showed their wooden certificates. Making another for Maal took ten coppers.

When you submit a certain amount of magic stones, the certificate would become made of metal, and coming and going from town wouldn't cost money anymore.

At any rate, preparations were complete.

“Our exploration starts now!”

“No Nii-chan, it's this way.”

Serge pushed Carlos.

Exploring the Labyrinth for the First Time

Opening the huge gate and looking down the long stairs, the walls and ceiling gave off a pale luminescence. In front, there was something like a big metallic mirror.

"When you touch this and recite the spell, you'll enter the maze. Is everyone ready?"

I see, is that why there was a six person restriction?

Each person nodded, touching the mirror.

"Then, let's go. Labyrinth, open your gates before the explorers."

Waves spread out from where we touched, and our bodies teleported to another location.

The next thing I knew, though the passage was similar, we stood at a spot that split left and right. Even if I looked behind us, there was no mirror.

"What do we do to return?"

Lulu asked timidly. If she didn't say it, perhaps no one would have worried about it.

"Along the outer sides of the labyrinth are mirrors to return. From here... the distance should be a bit of a walk."

Maal had memorized the map up to the third floor.

"What do we do? For now should we look for monsters to accustom ourselves to the labyrinth? There are almost no traps on the first floor and there are a lot of monsters that can be killed even I can kill by myself."

"Hmm," Ria folded her arms and became lost in thought.

Her goal was the last floor. She found no meaning in staying here to get used to it.

"First of all let's decide our order."

Serge said that in a tone that showed he was still excited. It was definitely important though.

Ria also had a plan for this.

“Maal and I as vanguards, then Carlos, Lulu, and Serge in that order, with Gig bringing up the rear, alright?”

“Ojou is going to be in the vanguard?”

Carlos showed disapproval, but there was a perfectly good reason for it.

“First of all, Gig is in the back to cope with attacks from behind. Maal is guiding us and paying attention to traps so we don’t walk into them. Moreover I’m so far up in the line next to her since I can notice enemies easily. It’s natural for magicians to be in the center, and when a fight happens Maal and Carlos will switch locations. Is there a problem?”

It was well-reasoned, so they decided to go with that for now.

At at rate, since this is a labyrinth that you can’t die in, it might be good to experience death once.

“Which reminds me, Serge. Can’t you use space-time magic to teleport to the surface?”

Like Evac for example, though I didn’t say that. *[TN: A spell from Dragon Quest. Teleports you out of a dungeon to the entrance.]*

“Unfortunately not. I can only teleport myself to places I can see. In addition, since it’s a hard magic to use, it’s difficult to use in a fight.”

“Ah, so how long will it take to get to the second floor?”

“It generally takes about half a day while being careful. While hurrying, about half that?”

“Alright, then let’s advance carefully while also adjusting our levels on these small fry enemies?”

The party formed rank and advanced.

The passage was wide enough for five adults to easily fit side by side. Occasionally hearing the sounds of fighting from far away, probably other explorers.

“Couldn’t we join up after coming inside?”

“That’s right. But considering the size of this place, I think it would be difficult. The spot the mirror transfers you to is random.”

The labyrinth seems to narrow the farther down you go, but for parties with the strength to go down that far, it’s difficult to work together.

Before long, a presence crept up from inside the passage.

Ria and Maal noticed quickly.

“Serge, stop it’s movement with magic. Maal, finish it off with an arrow. Let’s raise our levels with this for a bit.”

Something at this level was like a game. Even if you lived an ordinary life, this would come up.

Although you could earn a lot of experience by special practice and training, the fastest way was to kill monsters.

When you kill a monster, the source of its magic power—also called the Demon Source—is absorbed by people nearby. Though it’s said to reinforce your power, the experience is a definite.

The main monsters were meter long monitor lizards, snakes, and human-sized insects. There were nothing like goblins.

Because they were equivalent to minor demi-humans, even if we kill them though we don’t get any magic stones, but it’s fine.

“Treasure chest detection. How does it work?”

The wall faintly sunk in, there was definitely a treasure chest there.

She asked Maal while moving her hands across it. Though she thought it would open itself, Ria’s guess was incorrect.

“Would you like to try it out?”

“Yeah, it’s locked, so it may be trapped and dangerous though.”

“That’s right. Everyone go back a little.”

Standing before the treasure chest, Ria put her hand on her waist katana, unsheathing it to try and sink it in.

The metal part of the treasure chest was severed. Opening it, smoke flew out.

“It’s poisonous! Use anti-poison magic!”

Maal cried out in a hurry, but Lulu calmly stopped her.

“It’s alright, Ria has poison resistance.”

“Ah~, my tongue stings.”

Emerging from the smoke, it didn’t look like there was anything wrong with Ria. She was holding a small bottle that looked like a magic potion in her hand.

“Serge, what is this?”

“It’s a magic potion. It recovers a small amount of magic power.”

At times like these, the Identify Skill is convenient. Since it's magic that uses magic power, it's surprisingly difficult to use.

Whenever a treasure chest appeared after that, it was dealt with in a similar way.

Maal began to doubt the meaning of her existence on the way, but Lulu comforted her.

"Since Ria is like that, there's no helping it."

Even traps felt like they would broken through in a similar way.

When Maal found a trap using her Fairy Eyes, Ria would purposely stomp on it.

Spears protruded out, arrows came flying, and she fell in pitfall traps, but she was completely unhurt.

There was a pitfall trap with spears lining it, but she grasped them tightly with her hands and didn't let her body touch them.

"Though the spears aren't that good, I wonder if we can throw them. We have a good arrow reserve as it is."

Then about one hour of walking later, she knocked on the wall and spoke.

"Hey, are we not allowed to break this to shorten the distance?"

She said something completely countering the concept of a labyrinth.

"Break it? With a hammer or something?"

Towards the moderately amazed Maal, Ria shook her head.

"No, how you'd normally do it."

She bashed the stone wall with her fist. It collapsed.

"Yup, it wasn't that hard."

"Y-you shouldn't do that! When a passage is broken, monsters will gather! If we don't hurry and—"

Putting her hand on the upset Maal's shoulder, Ria spoke calmly.

"It's fine isn't it? Let's raise our levels. They're only going to come from in front and behind us."

According to Maal's common sense, it was ridiculous.

Heading farther into the labyrinth, one would be careful, be serious,

sneakily slip through traps and rejoice at getting treasure.

But Ria was different.

“Since the monsters from this way will all be handled by me, take care of over there. Oh, Maal, I’ll be relying on you to finish them off since I’ll be half-killing them.”

In the straight passage, they divided into two groups. Maal a little behind Ria. The other four stood in a line about twenty meters away.

Before long the first group arrived. Twenty monitor lizards.

Ria severed their limbs, causing them to hop about as Maal was able to easily deliver the fatal blow.

On the other side was Carlos skillfully using his shield in the center, with Gig and Serge’s firepower overwhelming the enemy.

Lulu occasionally used offensive magic as well. Though she had waited for something to heal at first, reducing the number of enemies took priority.

As many as one hundred reptile and insect enemies were killed, and the wave finally ended.

Everyone other than Ria were gasping for breath.

“N-Nee-chan, next time let’s think before fighting a bit more...”

Though Serge was proficient in the offensive fire magic in addition to space-time magic, it seems he was still tired.

“Did your level increase?”

“Yeah, mine and Maal’s went up by three, with Lulu’s group going up by two.”

They collected the magic stones for now, stripping them for raw materials such as the insects’ blades. The party then moved locations to try and recuperate.

Ria wiped down her katana, but there was nothing besmirching the beautiful blade.

“Apart from their strength, the number of them was a problem. It’s not like they’ll disappear when you defeat them like in a game.”

“Yeah. Since I’ve always fought in open areas, I didn’t consider that.”

When she fought against the army of orcs, it was in an open space in the town.

“Fighting in an open area, you’d be crushed by the numbers instead.”

Carlos said wearily. He's probably really tired. Using his shield to keep the enemies from getting to the magicians in the rear, a good way to fight.

"Then let's go down a floor now that the distance is shortened a lot."

"Before that, let's eat."

Everyone nodded towards Lulu's words.

"Geh, you eat monsters?"

Though Serge grimaced, they weren't any different from normal monitor lizards.

"But, there are rations..."

Serge came to store it expressly.

"Of course, those are also good. But in case an emergency happens that causes us to leave them, I'll eat anything in front of me."

"Even if we leave them, you should ignore the slimes though..."

Slimes are a small fry monster that became famous due to a certain nation's RPG, but in reality it's a terrifying foe.

Since it has a viscous body, it can soundlessly creep up and absorb it's prey whole, digesting it.

Especially for magicians who can only use magic by chanting it, just getting attacked on the face is a definite death.

"Nn, lizards are delicious. Even this place's insects... yup, they have a shrimp-like texture. They'd be good with just salt."

When there's a poisonous part, her tongue would sting and she'd learn it. Poison resistance is convenient.

Maal moved towards the insects without poison. It seems this happened often in her previous party.

Surprisingly, Lulu also didn't resist against eating insects. She said that she often ate them in her hometown.

Serge, who's memories of his past life coerced him, and Carlos, who was raised in a city, were disgusted after all. After trying a bite though, it was alright.

"But we killed too much. Slime-kun will have to do his best."

The party relieved its thirst with water that came out from magic and advanced further toward the interior of the labyrinth.

As planned, shortening the distance by breaking walls shortened it. Of course monsters would crowd up again and attack, but they disposed of them in the same way. As they became accustomed to it, their speed rose.

Without coming across another explorer, they arrived to the center of the first floor much faster than first estimated.

The room was wide and made out of the same material. The passage had one way to go. On the opposing wall was a mirror with the floor guardian lying in wait in front of it.

“Skeletal Swordsman, level 35.”

Serge used Identify as usual. Even if we fought as is, it would be an easy win.

“With that sword it would be a hard fight huh.”

Carlos frowned. The skeleton wielded just a sword and shield, definitely a bad match for him.

“Guess I’ll do it? It looks like he doesn’t even have long distance attacks, I’ll finish it in one shot.”

Offensive space-time magic rips apart space, so if the enemy doesn’t have resistance against magic they’ll be killed in one hit.

However, this skeletal warrior is something made of magic and probably has some magic resistance.

“Gig’s compatibility is probably good. Hit him lightly. Just in case, Lulu, prepare to use healing magic.”

“Alright.”

Speaking of unexpected, the fight was unexpectedly a bit of a struggle.

Gig attacked with his warhammer with all his strength, the Skeletal Warrior sidestepped, caught it, and warded the blow off.

It was a good fight until Serge blew off one of its legs with magic.

“Magic stone, GET~”

As expected, the magic stone was a different size than those from average monsters. The color was red, too.

“Incredible. Everyone is so strong.”

Though Maal felt admiration, there was still a long way to go.

When the party touched the mirror with their hands, they teleported to the second floor.

A Steady Advance

On the second floor, grass grew on the floor and ivy twined up the labyrinth walls.

The ceiling was brighter than the first floor's. It's probably for photosynthesis.

"There are many monstrous beasts on the second floor. The same monsters as the ones on the first floor also appear, but few of the insects."

We continued our steady advance.

Using the shortest path, we advanced by breaking walls.

Wolfs and tigers attacked, as well as wildlife like bears turned into monsters. It grew horns that held poison.

Splitting up the same as before, the groups of two and four defeated them.

Ria plucked off the beasts' limbs as usual while Maal finished them off with a crossbow.

It was to raise the lowest leveled person in the party, Maal. Serge also recognized it as so-called power leveling.

The other four also gradually smoothed out their cooperation.

The basis, Carlos would defend the first attacks with his shield while the rear guard keeps them at bay with magic.

While Gig stops their movement with sheer power, Carlos pierces their vitals with his sword and Serge cuts them apart with magic blades.

Since there were a lot of monsters with fur, it was a lot of work to skin them. Again, Maal was skilled at this.

Though Serge stored the skins, he still had a lot of room left.

“How much space do you have left to put things in?”

“I could put no less than one hundred things larger than Gig in. I’ve tried it before.”

Furthermore, it seems that the storage capacity increased steadily.

“... If Serge dies, what happens to everything inside?”

“It would probably just stay as it is. Though I don’t know how much would be in this labyrinth, it would disappear between space.”

He seemed to understand something of what would happen.

“In other words, Serge should be protected with the highest priority?”

“Please.”

Advancing through the labyrinth passageways, they appeared in a huge room.

Huge trees rose up with birds flying between them.

“There are some big rooms like these among the layers. Since there are strong monsters, please be careful.”

Maal’s previous party seems to have avoided large rooms like this. But these six people judged it wouldn’t be a problem.

“Our sight is limited huh. Let’s advance in close formation.”

On the floors that don’t have many traps, Ria took the lead. The formation was like an arrowhead.

“Be careful of surprise attacks. Particularly overhead!”

With a shout, she drew her katana.

Attacking from a tree, a leopard was cut by Quick Draw. Its face was splendidly cut in two.

While its fur was being stripped, Ria treated her katana. The sword that the Ogre King gave her had cut down many monsters up till now, but still wasn’t nicked. It hadn’t become dull either.

(This is a good katana~)

Ria wiped down the blade while grinning, looking like a dangerous character in all respects.

Before long they arrived at the mirror in the central part of the room. Serge threw in the towel.

“Sorry, but I’m already tired and worn out. My magic is also at its limit.”

Just like outside, the light in the labyrinth also lowered somewhat. Feels like dusk.

“It’s already night outside huh. Since this floor won’t darken any further, we don’t need to make camp yet.”

Here, Ria opened her mouth and said something unexpected.

“Let’s take a bath.”

The tall human that had known her for a long time had a cramped smile on his face, while the short human had on a puzzled expression.

“... But this area has neither water nor a hot spring here...”

Maal’s reaction was the most honest, but she didn’t comprehend Ria.

She scooped out the ground of the labyrinth with earth magic. Similarly, she hardened the walls in the same manner. After she filled it with water using water magic, she heated it with a fireball.

“This is a pseudo open air bath!”

Maal clapped her hands towards the happy Ria.

For the time being, the sleeping Serge was thrown into the bath with the other men. We got a meal ready in the mean time.

Maal managed it and cooked. Thanks to the magic bag, we weren’t lacking in seasonings, ingredients, and cookware.

“Maal is good at cooking.”

“Really? I’m pretty average.”

With Lulu who could only do minimal cooking, to Ria anything is good when put into her stomach. According to the two, Maal’s skill was like a mother’s.

When the meal was finished, she raised the temperature of the bath again and the women soaked in the hot water. Ria was hugging Maal.

“But being able to take a bath in a labyrinth, it’s absurd~”

Maal said while being drained of her strength.

“Aside from me, everyone was considerably sweaty and dirty. If you

can keep your body clean, you should not neglect it.”

After this, Ria intended to make baths whenever possible. Though for herself, she practically didn't sweat nor have blood on her at all.

Her previous life was as a Japanese, and was brought up in a somewhat luxurious life in the royal capital. She simply liked taking baths.

“Oi, no peeking! You guys!”

Though there was no possibility that they would do that, Ria said it like a beauty would.

“Ah~ nevertheless, Lulu's breasts are pretty big huh~”

“Wait, they'll hear!”

“Isn't that fine? These breasts are in a good dome shape. Though it's often said that elves have small breasts, halves are different after all~”

“Please don't rub them while saying that... wai-!”

Only able to hear the voices, the men slouched forward.

As for the person on guard duty, Ria served willingly. The Sleep Reduction Gift was convenient.

Standing guard alone with a big grin, she secretly polished her katana.

The next day, everyone's physical conditions were entirely restored.

The guardian here is a hellhound. It has deep red eyes and jet black fur, the magic beast known as the watchdog of hell.

“... A dog...? It'll be a bit of a pity to kill it.”

Only Ria would say such a carefree thing.

Larger than a bear, the dog was dripping drooling slovenly. Her sense of what she called cute was odd.

“It's level 45. It has no special abilities in particular.”

From the Identify, Carlos took the front with his high defensive strength.

After receiving Lulu's defensive magic and stopping the opponent's attacks with his shield, he attacked with his sword.

It was quite a stalemate.

“There’s no helping it~”

Without even drawing her katana, Ria approached at a steady pace. Though the hellhound naturally turned around to attack Ria, it was struck by her fist when it tried to bite at her.

Gyan! Though it yelped, it didn’t lose its will to fight. It even tried to snap at Ria again, it does have the brain of a beast after all.

Putting its face between her hands, she flung it away by force. Showing its stomach, the hellhound was pinned down by Ria.

“He~y, who’s a good doggy? Who is? You are~”

Being given a merciless rubbing attack, the hellhound was panting happily. Though it didn’t lose its desire to fight, its instincts as a dog didn’t let it defy someone stronger than itself.

After playing with the hellish monster for a while, Ria seemed to finally be satisfied.

The hellhound neatly waited next to her.

“Alright, then let’s go shall we?”

Then the party headed into the third floor without defeating the guardian.

The look of this floor was about the same as the first floor. In the stone pathway, all kinds of trees were entangled here and there.

“The main enemies here are golems. Most are wood golems, with the floor guardian being a stone golem.”

“A good enemy.”

In contrast to Gig being full of ambition, Lulu gave an unusual request.

“Please get as many golem cores as possible without breaking them. Since they are popular materials for experiments, they are worth a lot.”

We agreed.

When we arrived at the guardian before noon, we assaulted it as we were.

“It’s level 55~”

The two vanguards advanced and exchanged blows with it. During that, Carlos' sword was unable to endure the rough treatment and broke.

"Aah~! That was expensive!"

"It's because he didn't care for it properly," though Ria thought that, she took out and handed him a spare sword.

Even though he wasn't accustomed to the sword, it was still a one-handed sword. He was somehow able to continue fighting against the golem.

But soon, Serge lost interest.

"Gig, I'm going to use acceleration magic on you, so finish it up quickly 'kay?"

After a short amount of concentrating, the magic was finally put on Gig. His movements were obviously sped up.

He drove his warhammer into the stone golem. Carlos aimed at its joints.

Just as that happened, the golem was defeated. Of course, the golem's core was acquired safely.

"You could make a personal golem with this~"

By the way, if asked what kind of golem I'd make, it seems one for remodeling rooms would be useful.

The party entered the fourth floor.

The labyrinth was completely made of stone. The sources of light were nothing but unidentifiable torches placed on the wall.

The guardian there was a minotaur, Ria heard about it from the Ogre King.

Mainly, difficulty depended on the complexity of the labyrinth. It was on this floor that Maal's former party was annihilated.

"Alright, then shall we go ahead with the wall breaking strategy?"

No one could stop her anymore.

Ria destroyed the wall bare-handed. Though strong enemies did gather there, their level also rose considerably.

Twin-headed snakes, gigantic wolf spiders, the same group of

beasts as usual. So long as they didn't have special abilities, they could be defeated easily.

And Ria killed the enemies that had special abilities with a single stroke of her blade.

As a matter of fact, her Swordplay level increased to 8 when she fought the Ogre King.

Lulu restrained the massive amount of enemies with a wall of fire, while Carlos and Gig did the heavy labor of defeating the monsters, raising shouts and fighting.

Serge and Maal did the same as before, taking out monsters who escape from the vanguard with magic and arrows.

Taking a short break, we planned for the future.

"Maal, what kind of place is the 5th floor?"

"From what I've heard, it seems to be a place like a rocky desert. Rather than calling it a labyrinth, it's more like a series of rooms."

"Alright, then I'll go make a bath over there after this."

Ria didn't miss a beat.

The minotaur was pitiful.

In a normal fight, many strong explorers would have been turned into mince meat, but this was Ria.

Due to it being far weaker than the Ogre King, and was easily defeated.

Speedily moving behind it, she cut the back of its knees.

She then cut off the tendons of the elbow on the arm it held its huge battleaxe in.

Then the two warriors finished it off.

"I wonder if you can eat minotaurs..."

"Ria, minotaurs more or less fall under being demi-humans. You shouldn't eat them."

Thus, the party dove into the fifth floor.

Though this was the one wall for explorers, they weren't aware of that.

The Devil's Floor

The floor was different from the get go.

First of all, it didn't look like a labyrinth at all.

The rooms were very tall, about twenty meters. A white rock pillar supported the ceiling, giving off pale white light. Spread across the floor were rocks, looking like a wasteland.

It was a vast space. From what I could see, the wall also shined a dull white.

There was something like a nest in a crack on the pillar, and I caught sight of a monster in it. I also saw monsters prowling along the wall.

"There are Hellhounds..."

Carlos muttered bitterly. Though Ria did treat it like a dog, the boss on the second floor was a small fry here.

It vigorously rushed this way, but it stopped suddenly with a single glare from Ria, showing its belly in submission.

"How much does it fear you, Nee-chan..."

"Even though I love dogs~. Even keeping and feeding them, I like it."

"Although it is possible to make it your familiar, you can't take it out of here."

"That's a shame."

As for what came next, it was a black horse with two horns on its brow.

"It's a bi-cone. Unlike a horse, it is ferocious."

Two headed towards them, so one was left to Carlos and Gig while Ria handled the other.

"Hmph, it's not cute."

Due to some sort of criteria, she gave it up and killed it with a swing. The other one was also already defeated without any danger. Ria began to dismantle the bicorn.

"Horse meat♪ Horse meat♪"

"N-Nee-chan, don't you like horses?"

Drawn by Serge's question, Ria returned him a cheerful smile.

"Of course I like them. But this one isn't cute."

To begin with, it was different than a unicorn. Bicorns had poison in their horns. It was obviously classified as a monster.

In conclusion, the bicorn was delicious.

By the third room's exit, it was time for camp.

Ria dug the ground again, making an impromptu bath.

"Even so Nee-chan, your earth magic is your strong point."

"Serge, that's not it. Ria only learned the magic for the sake of making a bath."

"... Well, to each their own huh."

Basically, Ria is good at bestowal magic and reinforcement magic.

After that, offensive magic to defeat enemies at long range.

Though she's thought to be a muscle-brain that just leaves everything to her katana, she's learned a variety of methods.

The magicians were mentally exhausted from the day and took a full rest. The two people with keen senses, Ria and Maal, split up taking watch.

While stroking the fur of Maal's head on her lap, Ria's senses sharpened.

(Hmph...)

Something's watching us. No, probing us.

The presences. There wasn't just one.

One was obviously hostile. Not to the point of killing intent, probably because it's a distance away.

And another was curious. It was earnestly indicating its interest this way.

I felt this when we finished the first floor.

(There's one person... can't relax my guard...)

The hostility contained something like a pressure. That was it, not a big deal.

But that other thing, the curious presence, I couldn't feel the bottom of it.

It had probably been watching Ria the whole time. Yet not coming into contact.

(Well, what to do?)

For now, she had no choice but to wait and see.

They reached the center of the fifth floor the next day, and Ria found the owner of the signs.

"Explorers, you did well coming this far..."

That person spoke with human words.

At a glance you'd even think him a beastkin. However, if you looked closely, you'd find it made of just a single creature.

The legs of an eagle, the body of a bear, the head of a wolf, the horns of a sheep, and wings of a bat.

"Nee-chan, that's a devil. It can use magic at level 75 so be careful. It can blow fire."

Serge warned her with a whisper. Of course, Ria also noticed it wasn't the same as her opponents until now.

Devils and demons were different existences.

Summoned by some means from another world, they generally have high intelligence.

"He's been watching us since yesterday."

"Hmph, my lord took an interest. Of the recent explorers, there haven't been many chewy people. Of those who could be challengers to me, there were none."

And yet around ten percent of explorers still made it to the fifth floor.

"Now then, shall we get started? Don't disappoint me."

The devil produced many arrows of fire around his body.

"Lulu! Use defensive magic! Carlos, defend those three! Gig and I will attack!"

She broke into a run. Ria caught the fire arrow that came toward her with her palm.

Heat Resistance. If it's a flame of that degree, it was only slightly hot.

As for the fire arrow going towards Gig, it disappeared on the way. Seeing the movement of magic power, it was likely Serge's magic influencing the space.

And as expected, Carlos defended the three people with low defenses using his armor and shield.

The devil didn't have a chance to use magic again.

He attacked the rapidly approaching Ria with his claws. However, it was useless.

"Shaaah!"

Though the claws could probably cut through Ria's leather armor, she wasn't hit.

Unsheathing her sword with quick draw, she severed halfway down the claw devil's arm.

"Aaaah-!"

It was probably in pain. Gig brandished his warhammer towards it.

The devil retreated, jumping back to regain its stance. However, Ria's katana flashed again.

One leg was cut off. The devil's expression warped into that of a beast's.

"You bastards..."

In the middle of his sentence, the fireball Ria threw exploded.

When the devil appeared from within the smoke, it didn't appear to have taken any damage. Physical attacks were probably more effective after all.

The moment she thought that.

She felt a surge of unprecedented magic power and looked back reflexively.

She saw Serge, holding the sword in his hand towards the heavens.

"EX-CA-LI-BUUUUUUUUUR-!"

Then, he swung it.

With almost no gap, space was severed.

Since the devil's stance was broken, it wasn't split in two from the front, but one of its wing and arm were severed.

And then, it fell to where Ria ran.

Opening its mouth, the devil breathed fire.

Ria clad the blade of her katana in cold air.

Cutting through the flame, she cut off the devil's head.

Without leaving a body, the devil turned into black ash and disappeared.

Nothing was left other than a magic stone—no, it's purity was already high enough to be a magic crystal.

“Ah~, I'm tired. I didn't think it'd dodge my long-awaited special.”

Serge came over while rotating his arm at his shoulder. Except for Ria, everyone stared at the boy in amazement.

“Though I thought you still had a trump card, I never thought it'd be that strong.”

“Yu~p, it can't be used at close range since I have to prepare it for a sec, but it's my trump card.”

“It was successful because the Devil only paid attention to Ria,”
Serge said proudly.

“But I'd have to be careful. If I got hit, I'd probably die too.”

Kotsun. Ria knocked Serge on the head.

Though space-time magic can cut space, since it is composed of magic and by extension magic power, the resistances held by strong enemies could dampen the effect. But even so, Serge currently held a magic of powerful strength.

“Well then. Next is the sixth floor?”

“Excuse me, Ojou, we aren't going to turn back here?”

Carlos let out a comment while being conservative.

His favorite sword was broken and his shield bore considerable

damage as well. That's why I wanted him to bring a spare shield.

"I agree as well. Since our future enemies will be even stronger as we go down, we should get more information."

Maal spoke even more modestly than Carlos.

"Ah~, then me too, I want a cane. From now on I want to avoid spending even a little extra magical power."

"I want to stock up more on magic recovery potions as well."

The two magicians spoke.

Gig was the only one who didn't object, but didn't particularly approve. His style was to leave it all to Anego.

Though Ria was still good to go herself, there was no need to force it either.

"Well, I could still go, but it's more dangerous. Shall we return then?"

Thus, the explorers' first adventure was over.

After they returned, there was an uproar, but that's for the future.

Preparations

Being an explorer is an occupation.

They dive into the labyrinth, get treasures, defeat monsters, and get magic stones.

They don't have to think about anything else as they travel through the labyrinth. It's the dream that all hero candidates have. Or for those who don't have the ability to cling to others, it's their last hope.

This is the labyrinth of immortality. Even if you are caught by the jaws of death, you will revive. And lose your stuff.

That's why there's an excuse. Dying is foolish.

Drawing the line before reaching your limit just speaks of how wise you are.

No pride nor obstinacy. There's no resolution either.

Because that's the way it is for Labyrinth City's explorers.

However, sometimes they appear.

At a level people can't reach, the world can't reach, strong people that walk calmly.

It's not a question of whether or not they can complete the labyrinth. People are satisfied with their small world, and when they realize it, it's painful..

So they bark. Like a weak dog.

Even though the other person is much younger than themselves, smaller, and looks weak.

Opening the door and entering, was a little cat beastkin.

She was already an acquaintance of the guild. Though she used to be a party's slave scout, it was already known that her party messed up and were annihilated.

Having come here, she was probably bought again. Since she even had new equipment, her treatment had definitely been improved.

“Maal, I was worried. I thought you’d come back in a day since it was the first return.”

“Yeah, though I also thought that, Ria-chan...”

Watching the next person enter, every explorer was captivated.

Though she still had some traces of childhood, her beauty was radiant. Waving black hair, reflecting dim light.

In black garments, it was simple leather armor. Two katanas were hung at her waist.

“So? Was there any results?”

The talk between the receptionist and the cat beastkin acquaintance continued.

“Yeah, it was incredible. Ria-chan broke the labyrinth’s wall and—”

That was a beginner’s mistake. But surviving was lucky.

“She punched the hellhound bare-handed and treated her like a pet and—”

It was unbelievable.

“After defeating the devil, we temporarily returned~”

No way something like that happened.

“Oi oi, even if you’re just exaggerating, cut it out!”

Towards Maal, who was speaking happily, a voice from a male explorer came.

If it was before, they probably would have been silent here.

“It’s true! We seriously got a magic crystal!”

At that moment, Carlos put the Devil’s magic crystal on to the assessment counter.

“Let’s see, this is a minotaur’s, a golem’s, a skeletal warrior’s, a hellhound’s...”

The magic stones were placed down with a coarse sound. Though the magic stones were so-so, the amount was amazing.

“U-umm, what did you do to get so many magic stones?”

The Identify clerk’s face had a cramp.

Even if an ordinary medium-sized party went into the labyrinth for a few days, they might have one tenth this amount.

“Our Ojou broke the labyrinth walls. When we hunted the demons that gathered, it became like this.”

Carlos explained it in a tired voice. When thinking that the same thing might happen when he goes back into the labyrinth, it's no wonder he felt worn out.

“... I understand. Did you get anything else in the labyrinth?”

“Mainly furs and fangs... should I take it all out for now?”

Besides the insect carapaces and the bladed pieces, both weapons and gear used by the demons was left behind since it wasn't good quality. Several of the unnecessary golem cores as well. As for the things that seemed like magic potions, they all looked useful so they held on to it.

“This is... since immediate assessment isn't possible... could you wait until tomorrow?”

That was natural. Carlos nodded.

At that time, all eyes in the guild gathered towards the counter. The explorers whispered in low voices.

The rumor was passed around. That sometimes they appear, people that could easily pass through walls. No, those people don't even think they are obstacles. Those people should be legends.

But people won't meekly recognize that, of course.

“Oi oi. What kind of trick did you use? Tell us.”

Wearing armor, it was a warrior with a crude atmosphere. With a vulgar smile on his face, he looked down at Maal.

Before Maal could say anything further, Ria gently held her shoulder.

“It isn't a trick. I simply crushed from the front.”

Perhaps even the man before Maal right now wouldn't be an opponent for her. Maal's current level is 40.

In only three days, her level doubled.

“Ojou-chan should back off.”

As he said that, he reached out his arm. Ria grabbed it.

“What are you-, uwaaah!”

Ria's grip could crush a goblin's head by itself. Letting go in moderation, he looked towards her as though seeing a true monster.

“Let it go. Even the smallest kid in that party has a level above 40.”
A man who seemed to be a magician started talking from behind. He probably used Identify.

That ogre is even 55. But I can't understand that girl's...”

“Can't understand it? Read Resistance?”

“It could be magic. But either way, they aren't opponents you can stand against.”

A feeling of awe spread. Ria stuck out her chest and folded her arms in content.

“Hey Ria, let's go.”

Looking to avoid more trouble, Lulu urged her. The party left the guild.

When they returned to the mayor's mansion, though Klaus had gone out, a butler took care of the party.

They discussed things needed for the exploration, surprising Klaus during dinner, and had a peaceful sleep for the first time in a while after taking a bath.

While making Maal a hug pillow, Ria thought.

What she felt in the labyrinth, the presences.

It's said that the master of the labyrinth is a demon.

However, it didn't kill humans. Is there a demon that isn't hostile to humans?

To begin with, demon is the general term for demi-humans that live in the absolutely frozen demon territory. Ogres also used to be called demons. Even now they are affiliated with demons.

If that's the case, in spite of being demons, don't they also have a amicable relationship towards humans? Rather, can they even be called demons anymore?

Though it's said that the labyrinth was completed several times, the labyrinth's master wasn't overthrown. Therefore, the labyrinth is still here. Why wasn't it destroyed? Is it because it isn't necessary to do

so?

While unable to come to a conclusion from thinking, Ria fell asleep.

The entire next day was spent on preparations.

The first go around was to find a weapon and armor shop for Carlos' sword and shield, with Serge and Lulu gathering magic potions in the meanwhile.

Serge finally bought a cane. It was able to quicken the activation of water and earth magic. Apart from offensive ability, there was a thought to reduce anxiety about defensive capability.

"If the tenth floor's boss is a dragon, defensive magic is absolutely necessary."

Carlos even bought a mithril shield that was resistant to magic. Though the materials were so-so, it can be imbued with magic, which would be useful against non-simple attacks.

As expected, the armor was impossible. So while Serge looked at grimoires, he used magic to imbue hardness reinforcement, toughness reinforcement, and lightweight reinforcement.

"That's so good, using magic while reading a book like that."

Though Lulu was impressed, it was the effect of a Gift.

"Though Lulu is a half-elf, you can't use spirit magic?"

"U... since a special ability is different even if it's called magic..."

Lulu grew timid and drew circles on the ground. She definitely had a complex about it.

Gathering in a room after dinner, they looked through the information they gained that day.

Things concerning the heads of each floor was already heard from the Ogre King.

The problem is how to get to them. There weren't any active explorers that made it passed the eighth floor, and they weren't able to ask for a detailed account from a retired explorer. However, as you go lower enemies get stronger and the labyrinth seems to narrow.

“Iron golem on the sixth floor, ghost knight on the seventh floor, ‘dogazer’ on the eighth floor, and a hydra on the ninth floor. Judging from the trend on the floors up till now, demons related to the boss appear.”

At this, Maal raised her hand.

“Umm, though I know the other monsters, I haven’t heard of ‘dogazer’.”

Since she was sure Maal had heard about the details from her companions, she hadn’t explained. The ‘dogazer’ is a pseudo-living thing made from magic, a minor monster.

When hearing a brief explanation, Serge had a rough idea of it, but didn’t understand the details in particular.

“In order to obliterate pedophiles from the world, I heard an ancient empire made it...”

“That’s news to me.”

Since Lulu was Rufus’ assistant and happened to know the details by chance, she explained it.

Then, for the next day’s capture, the party went to sleep early.

Of course, Ria slept while closely embracing Maal.

Occupational Explorers

In the garden stained with the morning's glow, two silhouettes faced each other.

A girl empty handed though she wore two katanas and a beastkin girl wielding a knife in each hand.

"Come at me seriously. If it has a blade like a knife, I have a Gift."

Watching Ria calmly were her the other four comrades.

"It's alright, Maal. Since Ojou will never miss."

Towards Maal who was preparing to use the knife, Carlos urged.

Maal stared at Ria, saw her give a firm nod, and broke into a dash.

"Ah~~~, I can't win."

Defeated around ten times, Maal collapsed to the ground.

Of course, Ria wasn't even scratched. She wasn't even sweating.

On the contrary, Maal couldn't cause her to sweat.

Even after diving into the labyrinth, she wasn't able to make use of her endurance.

It was like her perfect opponent was dancing, an overwhelming sense of defeat.

"Because you relied only on your physical abilities, this is what happened. When the exploration is over, I'll teach you various things."

"We're only different by one year, so why is it..."

Even though she had memories of her past life, Ria's combat strength was definitely outside of common sense. At this age, she already exceeded her golden years from her previous life.

Since she has knowledge of original martial arts developed from her previous life, she had a large advantage over other people in one on

one combat.

“Anego, me next.”

“Breakfast is soon, so wait until after we get back from the labyrinth. I’ll properly instruct you after that.”

Gig relied on his physical abilities as well. Though he also has speed to go with his strength, there was no skill.

“Today’s target is three more floors, reaching the ninth floor in one go. Withdraw when someone dies, understood?”

Everyone nodded. They looked forward to getting stronger.

When we entered the guild building, Maal felt uncomfortable.

There was less people than usual. Something about the atmosphere was different. Murderous? A different temperature?

“Ah, Maal.”

Going to the reception desk as always, I got information immediately.

“Did something happen?”

“It was something you guys did.”

In other words, it was that.

When people like explorers start out, it’s more than a job, they have big goals in their hearts.

However, over the years they come to understand reality and spend their years in safety letting the years go by. More so here, at the immortal labyrinth.

Then suddenly, a party like a storm appeared.

Not even young, they were very young.

Going into the labyrinth for the first time and without losing anyone, they defeated the fifth floor’s devil and took his magic crystal.

The impact on them was huge. It ignited everyone’s smoldering fires.

“I see. So then they stormed into the labyrinth huh?”

Despite hearing that, Ria didn’t particularly feel anything about it.

“That doesn’t have anything to do with us. Then shall we go?”

None of the monsters on the first floor could be considered their enemies anymore.

They sometimes heard the sounds of combat from a distance away, it was probably other explorers. They didn't bother to go and see it. While destroying the labyrinth walls, they reached the head of the floor. This time, Ria forcibly cut it down with a single stroke of her blade.

On the second floor again, there were many explorers. Though they saw each other, they just passed by each other in mutual understanding.

The master of the floor was somehow or another different from the other day. Ria's group attacked it without fear.

Carlos stopped its movement and Serge dealt the decisive blow.

The third floor's golem was an instant kill, and they arrived on the fourth floor. They set up camp there. Despite the labyrinth being made of stone, Ria purposely destroyed the stones and built a bath. It already looked rather splendid.

Though they talked about the following day, Carlos unusually insisted on something.

"Until it becomes really dangerous, I want to have a one on one fight with the minotaur."

I see, so this is a knight's spirit?

Ria graciously approved it. The next day, Carlos fought with the minotaur as planned.

Level 65, an opponent who should still be a serious opponent for Carlos.

However, he utilized the power of his new shield well, parrying the battleaxe, and stabbing his sword into its body.

"Oooh," towards the roaring man, everyone applauded, "congratulations!"

On the fifth floor, everyone advanced in single file again.
Everyone's levels kept increasing as an outcome of fighting.
"When you get used to this area and when you leave it, it's dangerous."
Towards Serge's casually muttered words, the party firmly nodded.

The head of the floor was different than the devil from before.
A huge crow, with a horn growing from its head.
While flying in the air, its feathers became like blades.
Sometimes it made a piercing cry, tormenting our ears.
It also moved fast, magic couldn't hit it.

"I thought that something like this would happen."
Serge fired off a bolt of lightning, the devil was hit without a chance to dodge.
Though it wasn't a death blow, its movement dulled and lowered its altitude.
They wouldn't be able to reach if it was the standard person, but Ria was the exception.
Adjusting the grip on her spear, she stabbed its vitals. Leaving its magic crystal behind, the devil vanished.

Then they arrived in the unknown sixth floor.
The passageways were made of metal. It had a faint luminescence, the same as the other floors.
As for the enemies, they were golems. The golems' bodies were made of wood, stone, and some even made of rubber.
Though Carlos' sword couldn't cut into the rubber golems, Ria's katana cut it up wonderfully.

Since, as expected, it was hard to destroy the metal passages, the party finally had to explore the dungeon like normal.
Treasure chests were placed in hollows in the wall and on passageway altars. Maal's hands moved skillfully.
When she confirmed the type of trap, Ria did the manual labor to open it and Maal demonstrated her lock picking skills.

And now they faced the guardian.

It was a gigantic mass of iron.

With a bigger body than the minotaur, it was clad in armor.

The floor guardian of the sixth floor, the iron golem. It wielded a huge maul.

“Lulu, reinforce Carlos with magic! Carlos, team up with Gig and concentrate on defense! Gig attack from the left! Serge, aim your space-time magic at its legs!”

Then after Ria issued instructions, she assaulted the golem from the right.

Can I cut an iron golem with iron?

I can. I can do it.

At least, I can tear its armor up like paper if its iron.

“Oooooooh!”

Ria shouted, releasing a slashing attack from her stance prepared in advance.

The golem’s left wrist split in two at the joint.

“Alright, we can do this!”

Though it was the same iron, the hardness of tempered steel was entirely different.

Whenever Ria swung her katana, the large build was damaged. But since it wasn’t a living thing, it wasn’t directly damaged.

It was hard for a katana to deal damage to it with a strike.

Ria returned the katana to her waist, taking out a spare weapon from her bag.

“Tararara~n, the minotaur’s axe~”

With the tone of a young cat, she shifted her grip on the looted battleaxe. To say the least, the mass was different.

Though it was difficult for her to balance it with her light body weight, she could still brandish it while rotating, striking the golem’s leg.

On the other side, Gig and Carlos dodged the golem's weapon.

"LO-N-GI-NUS!"

Piercing through space, Serge's magic directly hit the golem's leg. Though it didn't completely destroy its armor, it did a lot of damage to an indirect part, arriving at the golem's knee.

Ria jumped at that moment, swinging the axe downward with all her strength. The huge axe stabbed into its neck, breaking from pressure.

But because of that, the golem stopped moving.

"Phew~, that was tiring."

Concentrating on defending, Carlos was the most mentally exhausted.

"Good work."

Receiving fatigue recovery magic from Lulu, they saw the large figure collapse.

"But how do we get the magic stone and core out?"

"Hmm? It won't be difficult."

Taking out her katana again, Ria cut the golem's chest.

Using the golem's own maul to hit it, the armor cracked, exposing its internals.

Inside was a magic crystal and a huge golem core.

"This also isn't a magic stone, it's a magic crystal. So to some extent, strong demons have magic crystals?"

Though Ria asked, the presence of magic stones was different between nature and the labyrinth, and wasn't able to figure it out immediately.

"Nee-chan, let's collect the golem for now. Since it's a lump of iron, there might be some use for it."

Serge could even store that large size.

At the end of the day, they camped in the floor head's room.

The next floor would be different from the ones until now, so the Ogre King said to not be careless in this hell.

Though the floor was metal, Ria made use of Serge's magic to drive the enormous hammer into the floor, hollowing out the floor into a bathtub.

"Baths refresh the spirit."

That night, the floor guardian did not revive.

Specter Knight

“Wow, this feeling...”

Though Lulu unintentionally let that out, everyone felt it.

Until now, the labyrinth had a level of light that they could see clearly with. However, the soil walls of the seventh floor only had minimal lit torches here and there.

Something seemed to be lurking in the darkness.

“It looks like ghosts showed up after all. Though, these aren’t my strong point.”

The one to speak with a cheerful was Maal.

“Maal, by some chance are you able to see somewhat in the dark?”

She nodded at Ria’s question.

“Most beastkin can.”

Indeed, she was a Neko-san.

“Mud walls, huh? If we knew where the center was, it would be nice to break them...”

Though Ria said it seriously as usual, the two magicians seriously stopped her.

The main monsters on this floor were undead and some could pass through walls. It wasn’t so bad when the enemy could only attack from the front and the rear, but if they came from all directions at once it would naturally have been hard for them to cope with.

The exploration was difficult.

The skeletons were fine. They were just mere skeletons. Aiming to sell off the equipment of well-equipped skeletons, they welcomed it. As expected, skeletal knights roaming the floor not as a floor guardian but as a normal appearance was harsh. Even so, they were only so strong.

The zombies were also fine. Moving corpses were gross, but they were pretty weak. Some of them were excessively strong and clever, but still stopped after their heads were crushed. There were

also abnormal conditions like poison and the like, but they could be cured with healing magic.

It was gross collecting magic stones from the undead. Though there was a mental problem with it being disgusting, thanks to the Goblin Bludgeoning Demon Ria-sama, the other members' loads weren't that much.

The problem was the ghosts.

So that their physical attacks could be effective towards them, they imbued magic on everyone's weapons the previous night.

But regarding their means of defending against the ghosts', they were limited.

Using magic to create barriers was the normal way to prevent it. However, when exploring for a long time, it was impossible to keep defensive magic up constantly.

"I'm getting kinda fired up."

Ria, who was calm while being surrounded by ghosts, was the exception. The vanguard warriors were used to pain, but this was exhausting.

The ghosts' attacks stole endurance and magical power from being touched directly. Giving dizziness and lightheadedness, the sudden attacks were dreadful as armor couldn't defend against them.

Ria, who had an abundance of abnormal condition resistances, was hardly affected with her magic and willpower.

It didn't feel real since the ghosts were like 3D CG. At best, they gave her goosebumps.

Probably due to her race, Lulu was strong against the ghosts' attacks. Maal made use of her senses, quickly avoiding direct contact.

Taking a short rest, the group took out a map. From the way things had went so far, the guardian's room must be in the center. Though there were a lot of blank areas, they didn't have the time to fill it out.

"We'll cut through in one go. The longer we spend here, the greater our exhaustion will be."

Motivated with Ria's rough words, the group dove towards the guardian.

They were in a room with a high ceiling and cold air reminiscent of catacombs.

Lined with intricately carved pillars, it gave the feeling of elegance.

Standing in the middle was a knight dressed in elaborately ornate armor. Its hand held a long sword, its face covered and hidden with a visor.

It was tall, but after becoming accustomed to seeing minotaurs and golems, it didn't feel like it.

However, it held a different atmosphere.

A specter knight.

This was the place the Ogre King said he first lost a comrade.

"Spread out!"

The four, Maal included, spread out like bullets, surrounding the specter knight.

They didn't have time to spare. If the person didn't have resistance against it, just being there sapped their vitality. That was the specter knight's ability.

The specter knight's focus turned towards the largest figure, Gig.

Its gaze was harmful. Gig held his chest, stumbling forward and crouching down.

Moreover, without wielding its sword, it pointed towards Carlos with its left hand.

"Ugu-"

Losing the feeling in his left arm, Carlos lost balance of the weight of his shield.

"Eyaaaah!"

Ria attacked, swinging her katana downward. The specter knight received the blow with his long sword. It would have broken the blade if it were poor quality, but the sword seemed to be a cursed sword.

It parried the katana attack skillfully. Its skill in combat itself was also high.

Maal fired an arrow from behind, piercing its armor. However, it didn't appear to damage it at all.

Gig, healed by Lulu's magic, swung his warhammer downwards, but it dodged magnificently, repaying him with an attack to the side.

"Gah..."

Fresh blood splattered. Simultaneously, Gig felt his vitality being snatched.

But at that moment, Ria did not overlook the small chance that had opened up.

She attacked with an upward diagonal slice, and though the specter knight parried with his sword, it couldn't completely kill the momentum. The attack sent its helmet flying. [TN: [Gyaku Kesa](#)]

There was, of course, the skull of a skeleton.

The helmet fell to the ground and disappeared into fog, returning to its original position on the specter's head.

The arrow Maal hit with had also corroded, falling to the ground as the crack in the armor regenerated.

"Nee-chan, this is bad! My magic can't undo it!"

Serge screamed after heading towards Carlos.

Lulu, who had healed Gig, was heading towards Carlos. Serge put acceleration magic on Lulu. Seeing the specter knight's motion, he didn't know if Lulu would be killed.

Though Maal had hit with another arrow, they had no answer to their current circumstances.

"Ria-chan, everything probably won't affect this guy if it isn't holy magic!"

Maal exclaimed in a crying voice.

A scout, vanguards, and Ria balanced the party by being in the rear guard, but it wasn't flawless. They had no one that could use the main countermeasure against, holy magic.

Though Rufus had done detailed investigations into most fields of magic, holy magic originates from power based on praying to god. The temple did not hand out control of it. Ria and Lulu as well, as those that could be called his disciples, they had no knowledge of it.

"It's alright! We just can't see the damage that's gone through!"

Serge shouted. He had the ability to see the other party's vitality. Though in this case, it was more like negative vitality.

“If that’s how it is, we’ll just shave it down.”

Ria stored her katana, taking out a warhammer for each hand. The opponent used a cursed sword, so she judged that she would whittle down the blade.

Gig started returning attacks. Ria circled behind to attack, giving the specter knight no room to dodge.

Lulu’s magic had also dispelled Carlos’ arm, it became a three person attack.

When Carlos and Gig became unable to move from the specter knight’s attacks, Lulu would heal them immediately.

Serge launched offensive magics to give an opening.

Surprisingly, the final blow was from one of Maal’s arrows.

The specter knight fell, its contents turning into ashes.

Leaving behind its weapon and armor, there was a magic crystal inside.

“It isn’t cursed. It’s armor is imbued with an auto repair function, same with its sword, as well as having the ability to steal endurance from those it cuts.”

After Serge used Identify, Ria took great interest in the sword and picked it up.

“If only it were a katana... Even if the armor doesn’t fit, does Carlos want to use the sword?”

“Eh, is that fine?”

Since the long sword had a weight that could be used with one hand, it would be just right for Carlos. She thought that, but there was a problem when he actually swung it.

“Until this exploration ends, I’ll use my old sword for now. After all, my hand isn’t used to that.”

Though the sword he was using now was also new, it’s things like length and balance were chosen carefully. If there were slight incompatibilities in combat, it could easily be fatal.

Though Ria could use swords of any length, she wouldn’t use it in actual combat without trying it out several times first.

“Then Serge, store this. After we get to the next floor we’ll take a break.”

Even though the specter knight was defeated, it wouldn’t feel like a rest in a place like a cemetery.

As Lulu treated their abnormal conditions, drinking magic recovery potions, the group set foot in the eighth floor.

Magic Creatures

They entered the eighth floor.

“Oh~, it’s the usual atmosphere.”

The one to say that with a feeling of relief was Gig, the one with the lowest aptitude for magic. Carlos also nodded.

But Maal, who had Fairy Eyes, as well as the three people who were magicians, immediately noticed the floor’s abnormality.

“Woah~, the magical power is thick.”

Rather than magical power, it was more correct to call it a dense amount of the beginnings of Demon Sources, but more or less she wasn’t wrong.

The smooth stone passageway was glowing an ivory white, the light seemed to emit strong magical power.

Resting for the two magicians went much faster than usual, they could feel their magical power recover. As for Ria, her magical power was never exhausted from using magic in the first place.

“This floor is niiice. Though it depends on the enemy’s strength, it feels like the perfect place to level up.”

Serge said, excitedly.

That was half correct, and half incorrect.

“Excalibur!”

Using it for the Nth time, Serge’s space cutting magic overwhelmed the chimera’s magic defense, cleaving it in two.

“Alright!”

There was also a manticore coming to attack from the opposite side, but Ria stopped it with her katana.

“Is everyone safe?”

Everyone raised a hand toward's Ria's call.

The enemies on this floor were difficult until they got used to them. They were synthetic organisms whose attacks were able to inflict abnormal conditions like poison and paralysis.

They also had high magic resistance. But when Serge used the trump card that he'd used on the fifth floor's devil on the normal monsters that roamed the labyrinth, the effects were apparent.

"Just a little, these enemies are strong..."

His initial vigor leaving, Serge sighed. It was understandable though. The small fry enemies on the eighth floor had about the same strength of the fifth floor's guardian. They could even use magic.

"Though magical power restores quickly, it's difficult when you're frazzled."

Lulu was also mentally fatigued. As for their ability to fight continuously, it was generally taxing to fight battle after battle. If they messed up, they could die from a single blow.

"Just a bit~. If the small fry are as strong as this, just how strong is that 'dogazer' thing?"

Serge asked a question with his previous life's knowledge, and even though Lulu knew it's ecology, she didn't know its actual strength.

Similarly, Ria who also had her previous life's knowledge, didn't know of something called a dogazer. Though she did know things like goblins and elves because they were famous.

"There have been few sightings of one in the first place, and since they are living things created from magic, maybe they each have individual differences?"

To Lulu's knowledge, other than when it is seen in labyrinths and ruins, it was not a demon that existed in the wild.

First of all, its outward appearance was that of a huge black sphere with a huge eyeball and mouth, with several tentacles growing from the top of it. It floated to move and wasn't that fast.

Though it could physically ram and bite to attack, the problem was its special ability.

First, it's huge eye reflects magic. When using magic against it, it would bounce back at you.

Then there's the tentacles, which could emit rays of magic with various effects. The kind of effect seemed to differ between each tentacle.

"The metal disintegration ray is troubling..."

Carlos exchanged glances with Gig. He was wearing plate armor and Gig wore chain mail.

"Either way, it seems we can prevent it with a magic defensive barrier."

To say nothing of Lulu, even Serge could use that magic.

"With things like paralysis and mind control, I'm not sure if we're ready for it."

Maal was taking the role of the devil's advocate again.

"Either way I'm going to use Identify on it first so that we know which rays it can use."

After a short break, the group headed towards the mysteries of the labyrinth.

From then on, a lot of magic creatures appeared and synthetic beasts played the leading role.

Though combat time increased, so did the amount of experience. Enemies that could use magic seemed to give more experience.

After a few hours, the group arrived at the guardian's room.

The room was circular, approximately thirty meters wide. Floating there, a three meter wide black sphere.

"Paralysis, petrification, freezing, hypnosis, mind control, metal disintegration, bio disintegration, and eight kinds of deadly poisons."

"Other than its rays, what about its defenses?"

Ria asked him. Since Serge's Identify was able to measure it so precisely, it was very convenient.

"About the same as those huge insects. As for its vitality... rather, its stamina is around the iron golem's."

Isn't it quite tenacious? No, isn't its defensive strength too much?

"Then the three warriors will run into the room and the magicians cover them with a magic defensive barrier. Objections?"

None. Ria, Carlos, and Gig each nodded, magic being used on them.
“Alright, let’s go!”

“This isn’t what we talked about!”

Ria let out an angry voice. The three warriors had to withdraw from the guardian’s room.

“So you said...”

Serge pouted. It definitely wasn’t his fault.

The trap was the room itself.

The ray the dogazer shot was aimed towards Gig first. The barrier prevented it from hitting.

When Lulu tried to use the barrier again, she noticed.

“I can’t use magic!”

Because entering the room diffused magical power. Magic couldn’t take form, only fired.

Ria had to carry and fling Gig out of the room after he began to attack allies due to the mind control ray. After that, his abnormal condition was removed with magic.

Even when they tried to hit the dogazer with a weak Water Bullet magic, it turned into plain water the moment it entered the room, falling down in place.

As for the barriers, once magic was applied it wouldn’t diffuse. But offensive magic couldn’t get through. This was such a room.

“What do we do?”

Carlos was at a loss. He couldn’t come up with a good way to defeat the dogazer from this situation.

Gig also felt depressed from being no help, as well as the two magicians.

“Well, I do know of one way to beat it.”

Everyone was surprised from Ria’s statement. Why didn’t she say it sooner?

“The Ogre King used the same method to break through though.

Well, it can't be helped."

Ria stood up, leaving her large and small katanas with Lulu just in case.

"Eh? What are you doing?"

"I'd be troubled if they were disintegrated by some chance."

From the magic bag, she took out her dear Beat to Death Wooden Sword. Then she gripped an axe in each hand. Though she wasn't accustomed to these weapons, the light rays would probably affect long-handled things.

"The Ogre King also had a hard time here. He had to defeat it by himself in the end."

With his resistance to abnormal conditions, the Ogre King was also quite strong, but that wasn't all. Now that she'd seen how magic diffused, she knew how to defend against the rays.

The Ogre King couldn't use magic. But he was rich in magical power itself.

"Then, I'm going."

Leaving that message, Ria ran into the guardian room alone.

The dogazer fired rays towards her. The first one was blocked by the magic defensive barrier.

The second ray. Resisted by Ria's resistance.

"Haah-!"

The slashing axe attack pierced the dogazer. She damaged it by rotating quickly.

The dogazer all-out rammed her, flashing again. Then a ray shot out. This time was the disintegration ray of instant death.

But it was countered by the magical power that Ria released.

That's right, magical power.

Not magic. Before becoming magic, it was a mass of pure power. It blocked the rays.

Though the room could scatter magical power in the magic, it couldn't erase the magical power itself. So in that case, if you release the magical power, it was able to defend.

The efficiency was bad. She brought magic, or pure energy so to speak, into existence and gave it a primary direction, using it as is.

But in this case, it was effective.

When the dogazer used magic to fire rays at her, Ria made use of her magical power to defend. There were no problems even if there were ten times more to defend against.

She just had to crush the dogazer before her magical power ran out.

Cracking the dogazer's carapace, Ria single-mindedly slammed her axe into it.

After it noticed that its rays had no effect, it used its fangs to attack. However, it was useless.

Its ramming attacks were sluggish, and its fangs were crushed by the axe.

In the end, Ria defeated the dogazer by herself.

"Somehow or another, isn't Nee-chan fine by herself?"

Towards Serge who greeted her with an amazed voice, Ria shook her head in response.

"That's unreasonable. If I were alone, I would have been overran by sheer numbers on some floor and collapse from running out of endurance."

Though she said that, she wanted to challenge this place by herself some time.

Proof of a Hero

“Wow~”

Maal let out a sound when we were transferred to the next floor, since it reminded her of her hometown's forest.

But if you looked closely, the density of the undergrowth, trees, and ivy that filled the open spaces were all very high.

The ninth floor was a jungle.

“But it's pretty strange.”

Serge muttered. Of the six, Ria and Carlos were raised in a city. Though with her previous life's knowledge, Ria also knew about woods and forests.

“There aren't any insects. I can't hear any birds or beasts either.”

Compared to the image of a jungle in Ria's head, this was different. Above all, it wasn't hot.

“We're in the labyrinth for sure.”

Maal's eyes could see the movement of magical power, in other words she could see the movements of demons. They wouldn't be surprised by an attack from poor visibility.

There were small and normal vipers, still enough to be hazardous.

Detoxification magic would take an active role and Maal's knife would also prove useful.

“This place is a little odd.”

Carlos spoke this time. Other than when they first invaded the floor, they hadn't seen any walls.

Leaves grew thickly overhead, blocking out the source of light. Since he was a man that had lived in a city resembling a labyrinth since birth, he felt something wrong.

“Wait a bit then, I'll check it out with magic.”

Serge focused, configuring a magic he hadn't used thus far. It wasn't a magic meant to be used in a labyrinth, but it would probably be effective on this floor.

It was a magic meant to understand an area centered on himself. Each time it touched an obstacle it grew a little more ambiguous after that, but it didn't seem to hit a wall.

After spending more than ten minutes of searching, Serge found it was a huge circular room.

"The center is open. There may be a swamp there."

There were various places with water other than the center of the floor. Along with the demons that relied on surprise attacks, there were many monitor lizards and amphibians that lived on the waterside.

Honestly though, the strength of the demons on the eighth floor were higher.

"Is the Hydra in the center...?"

Ria lead the way with Gig, making an open path with her machete. She passed Gig a matching machete.

"Since the Hydra is a disaster class creature, there's been a detailed investigation done on it."

Lulu described the characteristics of the Hydra; it was the same as Ria guessed with the knowledge of her previous life.

A serpent with eight heads. Both its blood and breath were toxic.

It had tremendous regenerative ability, able to quickly regrow within several several minutes even if it lost a head.

Though their lengths varied, it was large enough to be able to fully swallow a horse.

"Then I can't use this katana to sever its heads..."

The blade on Ria's katana was around seventy centimeters. Though it was just the right length to suddenly attack with it from her waist, it was difficult to use it on a large opponent.

Thinking that, she took out another katana she'd gotten from the Ogre King from her magic bag.

It was a katana ogres used with both hands—called a nodachi in her previous world, the blade's length was as tall as Ria. Though it wasn't hard to use with her physical strength, since her body weight was so light it had been stored away till now. [TN: [Nodachi Size](#)]

But now, it was finally going to see the light of day.

Tonight, Nagasone Kotetsu shall drink blood!"

Leaving behind the dangerous mutter, the group advanced towards the swamp in the center.

The jungle opened up and the large swamp came into view.

The soil here is solid, I'd say it's fitting for a battle. But there isn't much distance from the swamp huh?

"There's a suitable spot over there."

Going to a spot a little to the left, we reached an open grassy area. It's like this was meant for fighting... no, this place might actually be meant to fight in.

As you'd expect, there was no way to beat the Hydra in water. Even Ria thought that would be reckless. It was difficult to cut something with a katana underwater.

The moving group watched the swamp, but the Hydra didn't come out even after waiting.

"... Maybe we should look for the mirror for now?"

Serge clapped his hands together and asked, but they didn't know where that crucial mirror was. It might be in the middle of the swamp, but since the plants growing in the water were tall, their view was blocked.

"I don't want to get wet..."

Though Lulu said so really reluctantly, they didn't have a choice without a path.

"Let's check it out. It'd be good if there was a path to the mirror."

Serge examined the area with Spatial Grasp again. It consumed a lot of magical power compared to normal magic and was difficult to use.

Just about at the opposite side of the open area, there was a narrow path that continued towards a small island in the middle of the swamp. The mirror might be there.

"But don't attack the Hydra, it's dangerous to approach it."

They had no choice but to attack it in the end. In that case, how do they lure it?

"We could kill a demon, it might be lured out by the blood."

Killing a giant crocodile in the water, they ate it for the time being. The crocodile's meat was delicious.

"Alright, leave the rest to me now. Come and get me, Hydra!"

She left half of the crocodile's body to bleed out into the swamp. The blood spread out. It seemed that other demons didn't live in the swamp, as nothing came along for the leftovers.

Before long, a shadow manifested under the water's surface.

Making a sizzling sound, the head of a gigantic serpent appeared. Continually making that sizzling sound, more serpent heads appeared. Eight heads.

"H-huge..."

Carlos groaned involuntarily. It wasn't an exaggeration saying that it could swallow a horse whole.

This disaster class creature could destroy an entire waterfront town. Its overwhelming strength could take out the entire military strength of something at the level of a small country.

"Fireball!"

Ria's magic exploded towards the Hydra. Without showing any damage at all, its heads appeared from within the smoke.

"Follow the plan!"

Ria shouted, wielding the nodachi. Shouts responded to her call.

The extended battle began.

Gig changed weapons from the warhammer he specialized in to a battleaxe. As the warhammer was a blunt type weapon, even if he'd damaged the Hydra with it, it wouldn't have been able to sever the all-important heads.

Though he was a little unaccustomed with it, he was able to skillfully try to sever the heads. Carlos intercepted the heads heading to them to bite with his shield. Maal occasionally shot arrows towards the Hydra's eyes.

It took the three people to attack a head one at a time.

Ria clad her longsword in flames and went to work. If she burned the wounds, the Hydra knew it would take longer to heal itself. So even though she tried to behead it, other heads would attack, not giving her any opportunities.

She cut and burned, sliced and burned. Nevertheless, since it recovered little by little, even though she'd attacked it many times, she wasn't able to land a decisive blow.

Still, it was the right choice for her to switch weapons. With the katana's length, it would have done less damage to it.

Lulu and Serge were properly using recovery and fire magic. The wounds Gig and Carlos inflicted on it were scorched by the fire magic. Though fire didn't seem effective when it was used directly on its scales, as expected, its wounds didn't have any defensive strength.

Little by little, tiny amounts at a time, the Hydra's movements dulled. Though up to this point, they'd also received many attacks. Drinking magic restoration potions, Lulu and Serge both used healing and detoxification magic.

However, that balance was smashed in an instant.

"Haaaaaaah-!"

Ria's attack just about cut off a head. Pushed her katana further into it as the fire dove into the wound, she lopped off its head completely.

"First one!"

Though the number of heads only decreased by one, the balance tilted towards Ria's group instantly.

"Excalibur!"

Though he hadn't amassed enough magical power, Serge's magic was still able to partially sever a head. Ria followed up his attack, severing the second head.

"Flamethrower."

Lulu fired off flames. Though it just barely hit Ria's hair, due to her Heat Resistance there wasn't even any charring.

From then on Ria's attacks increasingly used magic.

Though she could obviously wield her katana and swing it, in order for Serge to use Excalibur, she exploded fireballs in its wounds.

At any rate, when talking about who had the most magical power in

the party, it was her. So to save magic recovery potions, it was best for Ria to be responsible for cauterizing the wounds.

Maal drew its attention and both Carlos and Gig exhausted the heads, while Serge cut them off. Ria would then sear the wounds. Lulu focused on healing.

Somewhere along the way, they grew into a steady workflow-like pace.

Before long, there was only one huge head remaining.

Though there was a theory of this last neck being invulnerable in her previous life, according to the subjugation records it wasn't like that. Continuing to earnestly wear it down, they injured and burned it. By chaining their attacks, the Hydra's blood flowed, certainly weakening.

Carlos stopped a fang attack in the end and Serge's magic decided it. The head was amputated.

Everyone's breathing was rough.

To say nothing of the warriors that had been moving around, the magicians had also been pushed to their limits, moreover repeatedly healing to the limit.

"This meat is poisonous. It's a shame, but we can't eat it..."

After taking a bite of meat that she had roasted just right, she spat it out. Though she had Poison Resistance, that didn't mean she liked eating poisoned food.

Even though she'd ran around the outer part of the battlefield, Maal still had most of her endurance left over, so she distributed endurance recovery potions to the warriors.

Cutting up the Hydra's gigantic body with an axe, Ria took out the magic crystal.

The huge crystal was practically the size of a person's head.

(Just how much money is that worth? At least more expensive than me.)

Thought Maal.

“Nee-chan, cut off the tail. The tip’s bone should be able to be processed into a sword.”

“Along with that, you should be able to gather a deadly poison from its liver. Since it’s dangerous for us, please do it.”

Because its blood was toxic, Maal couldn’t skin it.

“After that, it’d be nice to turn its hide into armor.”

Taking almost the same amount of time they’d spent on fighting, Ria harvested the Hydra’s materials.

“Well then, though we’ve reached our temporary goal...”

In the open area that’d become a battlefield, Ria spoke. Probably because they were wary of the Hydra’s poison, monsters didn’t approach.

“After coming this far, how could we not take a look at the tenth floor?”

Serge was eager. Everyone else as well, there was no one who wanted to return.

“We still have about half of our recovery potions remaining. Depending on the type of enemies on the tenth floor, we might be able to defeat the tenth floor?”

Even Lulu, who had the least combat desire among the group, decided they could.

“Same with me, I really want to see the tenth floor.”

Even the weakest, Maal, expressed her opinion.

The thing that had no records, the final floor.

There hasn’t been anyone to beat it, or at least if they have they’ve kept their mouths shut about it. For at least these two hundred years, there has been no record of it being beaten.

“Alright then, let’s go.”

Without being worked up, Ria declared.

The group of explorers stepped foot into—
—the completely unknown floor.

The Final Floor

“Eh-”

No one knew who that sound came from. It could have been anyone. The tenth floor. It was an open cave with a smooth stone floor. Pale light emanated from the stone. The area was around ten meters wide, with a staircase that lead downward in the corner.

And there was a mirror at the end of the staircase.

It seemed they could return to the ninth floor right now. Judging from their previous exploration, it wouldn't be difficult to go further back up either.

“This is... a resting place?”

Though Ria muttered in doubt, she went along with it.

It was hard to take a break in a place like the ninth floor's jungle. The enemies weren't obviously visible. It probably wasn't a trap either.

“There's no signs of magical power. This is an ordinary place.”

Maal's words proved it.

“Before the final boss, I guess we're meant to get ready to go here?”

Thinking about it as though playing a game, Serge thought that given the nature of this labyrinth, it was probably like that.

“For now, let's rest.”

Ria judged so. Though they had decided to advance, they originally planned to return right after, but it seemed they could sleep here.

Unfortunately, the stone floor was abnormally hard, so she was unable to dig a bath. They wiped down their equipment and bodies with water.

Laying out blankets, they laid down. The first to stand as lookouts were Maal and Ria. These two were best for the role because they were the least exhausted.

“I’m useless, aren’t I?”

Maal whispered in a weak voice.

Ria hugged Maal’s shoulder, slowly caressing her ear.

“It’s not like that.”

There were no lies in Ria’s words. If Maal weren’t there, the amount of time it took to explore the labyrinth would have been several times more. But, she knew that without it being said.

“Maal does things like cook and make camp, don’t you care for everyone? Only being able to fight isn’t a talent.”

Towards Maal, Ria was always gentle. A gentleness that one wouldn’t associate with Ria-chan the Merciless.

“But, I also want to be useful in fights.”

It’s not that she didn’t understand that feeling.

“I’m also one of your comrades right?”

Before, she was just a tool. Locate traps, release them, and pick the locks on treasure chests.

But here, under Ria, everyone thought of her as a comrade. She understood that even without it being said.

Here, she wasn’t a tool. She wanted to become a comrade that could fight together with them.

“Then, special training when we return.”

“Yes!”

“Shh. Be quiet.”

Maal held her mouth shut in a hurry.

“Alright, let’s go!”

After sleeping, they didn’t feel mentally fatigued even though it didn’t appear in a numerical value. The group stepped onto the staircase leading down.

Rather than a labyrinth, this was like a passage.

It was at most three meters wide. The ceiling was low, too. Though

they thought it was a straight line at first, it bent very slightly to the left.

“A spiral staircase~? It feels somewhat like DNA, doesn’t it...”

Only Ria understood the word that Serge used. Though Ria wasn’t much a person interested in science, she still sometimes watched national broadcasted programs.

“Isn’t that a double helix? I think this is entirely different though.”

“Yeah, I was just saying that. But going down a spiral staircase into the ground, it’s somewhat like it’s heading to hell. I have a bad feeling.”

He was likely being talkative due to being anxious. Not that she didn’t understand how he was feeling.

This labyrinth gave a feeling of being enclosed. Unlike the previous floors, it had the atmosphere of being impossible to return from.

“Ah, wait a second.”

Along the way, Serge stopped the group. After a moment of concentration, he checked it out using magic.

“It’s alright, the path behind us wasn’t closed off.”

“Incidentally, could you see what’s ahead of us?”

“Roger that.”

Serge’s magic was space-time magic. Even if he couldn’t see it, he could understand what was in a space as long as it wasn’t shielded.

“The depth is... about five castle gates worth. There’s probably something like a door at the end. If there’s a room on the other side of the wall, wouldn’t it be the size of five town blocks?”

There was probably a guardian in such a large place.

“I wonder if it’s a Dragon?”

Ria muttered. The group all looked reluctant.

What’s a Dragon? The strongest living creature in the world. It’s stronger than most demons.

After all, two thousand years ago and again a thousand years ago, there were large floods of demons. With the help of Darkness Dragon Valis’ strength, mankind finally won.

Casalia’s founder, Leyte Anaia, became Valis’ wife, giving birth to the second generation’s king. Ria’s ancestor.

“Well, though I said a Dragon that doesn’t mean it’s one of the Five God Dragons.”

Carlos knew of legends with knights battling dragons, so she continued.

“If a Five God Dragon came out, even I would escape.”

Even if Ria was entirely confident, she didn’t think she could compete with a God Dragon. It’s like telling a human to fight against a nuclear warhead.

“It’ll be fine if it’s an Earth Dragon though.”

“Yeah, they’re just big monitor lizards.”

Towards Lulu’s question, Ria threw her chest out and answered proudly this time.

“I could even beat around fifty of them now. If I have a weapon.”

Though Ria said such a terrifying thing as though it were normal, compared to the Ogre King, a large monitor lizard was nothing to be afraid of.

Just one of them could overrun a standard village though.

“Nee-chan, have you fought a true dragon?”

Among Ria-chan the Merciless’ previous battles, there were none against dragons.

“Nope. But it should be stronger than a Hydra.”

“Record has it that they can destroy huge cities.”

It’s because they experienced a Dragon’s wrath.

While talking about such things, the group arrived at the bottom.

In front of them were large metallic dual doors.

“That’s... it’s made of mithril.”

Lulu reported in surprise. To use valuable mithril in such a way...

“It’s lucky.”

Grinning broadly, Ria took out her axe and destroyed the door hinged. Naturally, the door fell inwards.

“Serge, collect the mithril.”

“Roger that, Nee-chan.”

Shrewdly, he collected the masses of metal that used to be doors.

The party walked into the room.

Their vision plunged into darkness.

“I can’t see farther inside.”

Even Maal, whose eyes were good in the dark, couldn’t see.

“Huge rocks are scattered around.”

Serge was able to understand what was inside.
It was time for a strategy meeting then.

“First of all, in case of an emergency, Maal will withdraw to defend Serge.”

“That’s-!”

Maal raised her voice in protest.

“All of the loot is kept in his storage space, so it’s fine even if I die.”

In their battles so far, they knew their opponent. So they were able to figure out about when they should retreat.

But this time, it’s a Dragon.

“The weapons and armor we’ve collected at great pains, all of it would be lost. That is why, excluding the minimum required goods, everything was given to Serge.”

The magic bag normally had insufficient capacity, but it didn’t have many things in it since her currency and things like that were given to him as well.

“He has my things for the time being as well.”

Besides currency, Ria also gave him her jewels and precious metals taken from castle, including the dagger with the seal on it.

“When push comes to shove, Maal, we’re relying on you.”

If Serge went by himself, he probably wouldn’t be able to make it out of the labyrinth. But if Maal were there helping him avoid danger, they could escape.

“Understood.”

Maal nodded with a resolute expression. It was a face that had realized the responsibility of the work left to her.

Lulu casted defensive magic on everyone. In addition to protection for physical and magical, she used magic that would prevent things from influencing their minds as well. That a Dragon’s roar could inflict panic in people was well known.

Serge used acceleration magic on everyone. Though he could use it from far away, the magical power consumed was lower when they were in contact.

“Well then, let’s go.”

A ball of light emitted from Lulu’s cane, ripping apart the darkness as it traveled forward, then exploded.

At that moment, the huge room was illuminated.

Looking in, there was a huge chunk of rock.

No, not a rock, it looked more like a hill.

A giant.

With a maul in its hand, the giant stood up.

It was larger than Gig's huge figure, easily twenty times larger.

It had just one eye. Horns sprouted from his head.

"A Cyclops..."

An existence that rivaled a dragon.

A descendant of the fallen gods.

With a savage appearance having just a loincloth and the maul, it evoked more than fear.

The giant inhaled, then bellowed.

The atmosphere was numbing.

If it weren't for the defensive magic, it would have been impossible for some people to move with just that.

"Aaaaaah-!"

Ria also bellowed. She began to run towards the giant, nodachi in hand.

Then, the battle began.

The Giant's Attack

Overwhelming.

Its strength was overwhelming.

Not that it was a violent strength. More than being violent, it was aggressive.

It wasn't attacking, it was simply removing obstacles.

It was that kind of a simple and pure strength.

The Cyclops' movements were faster than you'd imagine something with that gigantic of a figure could manage. If it weren't for Serge's acceleration magic, it could have been an immediate checkmate.

But apart from being able to avoid its attacks, what could they do?

Even if they attacked all out, they couldn't even reach the giant's knees. Even if the giant's skin took a blow from Gig's warhammer, it was elastic enough to repel the attack.

"Excalibur!"

Serge's magic cut through space. But it only went as far as slicing through a single thin layer of the giant's skin.

"Fireball!"

Boosted by her magical power, Ria's magic bounced off the surface of the giant's skin.

Ria's nodachi, completely reinforced by magic, was also barely able to cause the giant to bleed.

Though even so, it probably still felt pain. The giant bellowed once again, beginning to retaliate in a rage.

A blow from its maul smashed the ground open, scattering debris through the room. Even when Ria built baths, she didn't damage the materials.

As a small fortune, the giant's weapon and limbs were unable to catch anyone in the group. Of course, they were still under the effect of acceleration magic.

The giant was furious.

It didn't have the gods' wisdom, it had their strength.

Whipping up a gale by swinging its maul, the debris became bullets. They weren't able to prevent it at all.

"Aaaaah-!"

Ria roared. By using Body Reinforcement, she endured the stones bashing into her.

Rotating, she swung her blade at the giant's ankle to sever the tendon.

It was useless.

The steel-like skin absorbed most of the slash's power, only being made to bleed slightly.

Still, Ria didn't give up. Without hesitating, she coated her blade with the venom she got from the Hydra. She continually slashed at the same spot over and over.

But she still couldn't see any effect. It resisted her Identify.

"Serge, use Identify!"

"Sorry! I can't see it!"

Even Serge's Identify couldn't see through it. As a descendant of the fallen gods, it held abilities worthy of being called that.

The giant's attacks continued in the meantime.

With one of its attacks, an innumerable amount of rocks flew towards Lulu. She couldn't avoid it.

Carlos intercepted the debris. The impact was enough to distort his shield.

But Lulu was safe. Carlos' arm as well, it was just numbed.

“Are you alright!?”

Towards Carlos’ question, Lulu tried to answer.
Tried to.

The giant swung its arm, blowing Carlos away.

Like swatting an insect, it was a movement of casual irritation.
His shield was blown off, his armor crooked and warped from the strike.

Striking against the wall, the knight vomited blood.
Lulu’s recovery magic flew. However, the distorted armor prevented his flesh from being restored.

The giant followed him in pursuit.
Crunch. Carlos was crushed.

It was an instant kill. That was probably for the best.
Turning into particles of light, Carlos’ body disappeared, leaving behind the flattened armor. It was stained with blood.

His sword went somewhere.
Lulu thought of such an inconsequential thing. While she thought, she screamed.

How dare you.
How dare you do that to Carlos.

She had completely lost her cool. Though it wasn’t pointed out much, Lulu was simplistic and hot-blooded. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have left her hometown and come along with Ria on her journey.
Her aggressiveness was usually pinned down by her logic. Even so, someone just died in front of her. That’s all she thought about.
Refining her magical power. Composing the magic formula.
She raised her cane.

“White Flame Prison!”

An advanced fire magic that held great strength in this world. White flame serpents struck the Cyclops’ chest.

The giant bellowed. It was a cry of agony.
Its chest had reddened red-hot like minerals.
But that was all.

The giant loomed over the magician that bestowed such agony to it, brandishing its maul.

“Lulu-!”

As Ria’s cry reached her, the maul swung down.

Splat. Her body crushed, only the cane remained.

A Katana That Doesn't Break

When Carlos and Lulu dropped out, Serge honestly thought that it was already useless.

Even if they struggled here, there was no hope in a fight like this. Serge's trump card hugely damaged enemies, and Ria's katana couldn't not kill.

But neither of them worked right now.

Though he'd also tried Longinus, the wound was to the degree of like being pricked by a needle.

Now, there was the final trump card. But if he used it, his magical power would be almost entirely exhausted. He wouldn't be able to use acceleration if he used it.

If it's Ria, she could manage to dodge somehow. But it would be difficult to dodge the giant's attacks without acceleration magic. If Gig received even a single blow, even though his body was also tough, it would tragically become minced meat.

It's safe even if you die. Seeing Carlos and Lulu disappear, from what Maal said, he didn't doubt it.

However, he didn't want to die.

Serge, who had memories of dying, especially thought so.

Rather than if it were an instant death, if his limbs were torn off, just how much pain would he remember?

"Nee-chan!"

We should retreat. It's okay if it's right now.

Though it was unfortunate for Carlos and Lulu, he had to abandon the cane and armor. If you thought about their current income, it would become a funny story later on.

Having thought that, he was just a person that didn't have the blood of a warrior.

Maal was of the same opinion as Serge. She wanted to escape now. Even if she said they'd be revived, she didn't want to experience the

moment of suffering from dying again.
But she didn't run away. Not while Ria was still fighting.

The two warriors didn't think of running away.
(Even if I die, Maal will lead Serge away and escape.)
Thinking that, she single-mindedly concentrated on the fight.
She wanted to kill the enemy before her. She wanted to kill. That's all she thought about.
Rather than calling it the instincts of a warrior, it was likely the instincts of a beast. Or maybe more primal instincts.

Ria thought.
(This is a true killing of each other.)

She was continuing the previous one. The Ogre King's fight. Though that also had a danger towards her life, the fight was stopped.
Of course, her blood was boiling. Her heart throbbed while fighting.

But this was different.

As well as with the floor fights so far, they had every chance of winning in those hard fights.

But this was different.

It couldn't be predicted. Though they made a strategy, even it failed.
Still, single-mindedly, she wanted to kill it. Without thinking about her own life or death, she just gradually increased her killing intent.

"Eyaaah-!"

She put her all into every single technique, ability, and downward stroke of her katana.

She was able to partly cut off the giant's toe.

And, unable to endure it, the katana shattered.

It didn't break. With Ria's magical power, it couldn't withstand the impact of the slash, exploding the steel from the inside.
But because of that, one of the giant's fingers were torn to shreds.

The giant bellowed. It raged vehemently.
The labyrinth, likely made solid for that reason, broke all around.
Due to the impact of the debris, Gig's movements dulled. The giant's fist crashed down there.

Gig was unlucky. He wasn't killed instantly.
The pain from experiencing the blow continued for several seconds.

Serge's quick-wit proved effected. He used the mithril door collected earlier as a shield.

Huddled shoulder to shoulder with Maal, they watched Gig become light and disappear.

When he stored the door once again, they decided it was best to escape. Fortunately, the exit wasn't blocked.

Then, Serge fired off his last remaining trump card.

He picked up a labyrinth stone that had been scattered about. He looked at the giant's figure.

It's eye was probably its weak spot. With just one, it was definitely a weak spot. But it wouldn't be a fatal wound.

The brain or the heart? Probably the heart. He could imagine the giant's body could probably rage even if it didn't have a brain.

"Nee-chan! I'm going to use my final trump card! When I use it, I'll be out of magical power!"

He composed the magic formula in his head. Increase the magical power. Mental concentration. He himself would die if it accidentally went off.

He concentrated on the rock in his hand. He aimed for the giant's heart.

"Explosion Teleport"

The rock in his hand disappeared.

Teleporting a solid into a solid. When he used it on a beast as a guinea pig, he sent it into its head. He thought it would simply die.

But it actually caused an explosion. Because substances overlapped each other, it gave that much of an impact.

With his whole body hit by the blast, he had to stay in bed for days. His magical power didn't recover for a while after either.

And now, he used it again.

An explosion occurred in the giant's chest.
It was enough for the giant to drop down. Blood splattered.
"It wasn't enough...?"

The giant held its hand to its chest. It definitely damaged it, giving it a wound it didn't have until now. But that was all.
Even Serge's best magic couldn't get through the giant. Though it brought its hand to the wound on its chest, its movements weren't dulled.

But it did distract it slightly.
To sever the giant's wounded finger, Ria struck with the battleaxe she took out.
It felt pain. Though it wasn't to the point of damaging it, pain was pain.
Though it wouldn't die even if it lost a finger, it couldn't be called negligible.

The giant stooped. It was a movement to protect its wound. It's weak point, the eye, was near.
Ria threw a spear. It wasn't a spear she had multiple of. It was a spear she carefully selected in the royal capital.
But even so, it only slightly grazed the eyeball, falling to the ground after barely injuring it.

"Dammit."
Ria cursed. Its vital points grew slightly closer. But she no longer had her reliable nodachi.
She took a sword out from her bag. A sword made of mithril. Though its hardness and sharpness was inferior, it would work if she infused it with magical power.
Though she hit the giant's foot without holding back her magical power, it was too dull. Overall it was about the same as the katana.
Though at least it didn't explode.

Using the lightness of her body without reservation, she toyed with the giant. Though if her attacks had no effect, she would use up all of her energy and be crushed.

Putting the magical power into the sword to the limits, she swung downwards towards the giant's finger.

Again, a single finger was severed. This sword also broke.

(When this fight is over, I'm going to choose a genuine katana.)

Ria made up her mind.

She swung a battleaxe towards the giant's wounded hand.

It would probably inflict pain to it. But no matter how many times she did that, it wouldn't defeat the giant.

But even so, she continued fighting. As though her only reason for living was to fight.

The acceleration magic expired and the giant's hand struck her. Her body strongly banged against the stone wall.

But she dashed back in a single breath, attacking with the axe again.

The handle bent and became impossible to use. Moreover, it stopped the attack, warding it off.

Just getting smashed is bad. She could endure.

Her muscles and bones were creaking, but she could withstand it.

Pain Resistance-san, you're doing a good job.

Losing her balance, she lurched forward. Since the acceleration had ran out.

Though she felt pain everywhere, she could move. She could still fight.

Letting out a roar, she swung down her axe instead.

It was still no good. The weapon was too weak. Deflected by its skin and muscles, the steel bent.

She was crushed.

By its palm, she was crushed. Unknowingly, her movements had dulled.

But she could still move. Body Strengthening-san, Bone Strengthening-san, Internal Strengthening-san, thank you for the good work.

Still able to move even with the ground beneath her destroyed, the giant seriously tried to crush her.

Its fist destroyed the face of the floor. Flying debris dug into Ria's armor, tearing her clothes to shreds.

Moreover, she crashed into the wall. Her muscles were strained and creaking. She bled severely. A normal person would have died from their internal organs exploding.

But she could still move.

She used her own katana as a cane to stand up. The desire to fight didn't vanish from her eyes.

Death? Something like that wasn't important anymore.

The giant swung its hand, striking the wall again and again. Even her reinforced skeleton was creaking, very likely fracturing.

She regenerated. She healed. Her Gift unleashed. But it still wasn't enough.

It still wasn't enough to defeat this giant.

Unsteadily walking towards the small being, the giant picked her up.

"Nee-chan!"

"Ria-chan!"

Bloodied and tattered, probably seeing this tiny creature as having become useless, the giant tried to eat her.

Looking at the giant's uneven teeth in front of her, Ria laughed.

"You fell for it, idiot."

Her left leg was held by the giant. She severed it with her own katana.

Due to the free fall, she fell into the giant's mouth. Before she was chewed, she invaded its insides.

The giant's throat moves, swallowing Ria. No, swallowed.

Ria's single leg fell to the ground. It was cut into a clean cross-section.

The giant held its chest, letting out a groan of agony.

Inside the giant's stomach, Ria rampaged without reservations.

Using Fireball magic, she illuminated the wet and glistening organ,

recklessly slashing everything deeply with her blade.

Since she didn't have a leg, she stabbed herself into place with a weapon.

It's over if she's vomited up. There wouldn't be another chance. She didn't any endurance left.

Due to the stomach acid, her armor and clothes melted. But Ria didn't stop moving.

Having Acid Resistance was good.

The giant was suffering.

It couldn't even struggle, it just suffered. It tore at its own stomach. Though it would fall before long, it moved about unsightly, tearing through its own chest with its sharp claws.

Serge and Maal fearfully watched this happen.

Gradually, the giant's movements began to slow. Convulsing before long, then completely unmoving.

She did it.

"She did it from the inside. So even giants can be defeated."

Stunned, Serge mumbled to himself. It was unbelievable. Was she the Inch-High Samurai? He seriously thought there was no way she would go that far, to do something like cut off her own leg. [TN: [*Issun Boshi – "Inch-High Samurai"*](#)]

A katana stuck out from the belly of the giant that had fallen on its back.

Probably since its toughness went away when it died, she could easily cut through its muscles.

Along with the smell of its entrails, a lump of meat appeared. Wearing just her long black hair, Ria was covered with blood and acid.

She had used the katana as a substitute for a walking stick, but it wasn't able to endure the abuse and acid, breaking.

The one-legged Ria collapsed, slipping down from the giant's belly.
"Ria-chan!"

Maal rushed over. As for Serge, he didn't have the strength to do so so he unsteadily wobbled towards her.

Her breathing was rough. One of her eyes had disappeared from the acid. Even so, she spoke to the two figures.

"It's... my win."

She then lost consciousness.

The Labyrinth's Garden

As though emerging from the bottom of a deep lake, her consciousness gradually surfaced.

As she awoke from her slumber, the existence known as Ria was being reconstructed.

Her senses returned. She clearly experienced her sense of touch.

(I.. can move...?)

In the dark, she reached out. Something crisp broke, light flooded her eyes.

She could shift her body. From her fingertips to the tips of her toes.

She recalled that memory. She'd needed to cut off her leg. Did Lulu reattach it?

Still not entirely lucid, Ria wondered what happened to her as she got up.

She was sleeping on a bed in the nude. It was a cabin with a strong wooden aroma. There were black fragments from something on the bed, it seemed to be what had surrounded Ria.

(Where... is this?)

Daylight streamed in from the wooden floor. If she were out of the dungeon, why was she in a cabin like this?

A change of clothes were left for Ria on top of the chair sitting next to the bed. There were boots left below it as well. All things she had given to Serge before the battle.

There were neatly folded underwear. On that subject, though she told Serge he didn't have to do something strange like that earnestly, he answered with a discouraged expression.

"Nee-chan, I'm not at the age where sexual desire comes out yet. Besides, I'm just not interested in the contents."

Smiling while recalling that, Ria dressed. There were neither weapons nor armor. Neither was the magic bag there. They probably all melted in the giants stomach. There was the dagger with the seal.

Though her equipment felt very disheartening, Ria left the cabin.

“Wow...”

Filled with light, a field brimming with flowers extended before her. The sun was almost directly above, yet it shined with a gentle light. There were large trees spread out here and there, producing shade. From the nearest tree came a figure running towards her.

“Nee-chan~”

It was Serge. Though he was running with a smile on his face, he was worried about Ria.

“That’s good, you woke up.”

“And Maal?”

Though she vigorously clapped the boy on the top of his head in an embrace, Ria worried about the other person’s survival.

“I conveyed the message to Maal. I’ve been waiting for Nee-chan to hatch from the egg.”

He said something that she couldn’t ignore.

“Egg?”

She didn’t understand. However, she assumed it was probably the fragments that covered the bed.

“Huh? I thought it was something from Nee-chan’s gift though.”

Though Serge tilted his head, Ria had no clue what it was. When she used Self Check, it appeared that Gifts were unleashed.

Dormancy, it was like molting. There was also Super Regeneration too. She guessed it was better than High Speed Regeneration.

“Apparently, looks like it. Since it was the first time I’ve gotten that injured.”

In that case, it’s good. According to Serge, a black eggshell covered Ria’s fainted body. Then without reacting at all, a week passed.

“A week huh...”

“After a day went by, Maal went back to the surface. I stayed behind because of the lord of the labyrinth’s story...”

“The lord of the labyrinth, that means this is inside of the labyrinth?”

Though she expected it, she wondered how they reproduced the sun in the labyrinth.

“It’s because there’s eleven floors in the labyrinth. More accurately, it seems closer to another world though.”

Another world again, that’s a big scaled story.

“Then, what of the labyrinth’s lord?”

She somewhat raised her guard. Since it was an existence that could produce such a gentle place, it probably wasn't wicked. It might have close to a human's sensibilities. She could judge that based on Serge's appearance.

Though at the same time, they must be the owner of an immense power.

"O~i, Labyrinth~"

Serge waived his arms towards a big tree. From there, a fluffy light headed their way.

It wasn't that big. Around thirty centimeters at most. In the light, she could make out the appearance of a winged fairy.

Even so, Labyrinth?

"Oh my, you woke up."

The soft light dimmed, showing the appearance of a tiny fairy wearing a green dress.

"My name is Labyrinth. The lord of this labyrinth."

Her face was full of a powerful curiosity. Ria remembered this gaze. It was the gaze she'd felt throughout the dungeon.

Continuing her sentence, Ria froze.

"The same as you two, I am a reincarnated person."

For the time being, after finishing her self introduction, Labyrinth spoke with a smile.

"Being born as a princess was a great use of points~"

Though that was a misunderstanding, it was easily corrected. Labyrinth had a Gift called Fairy's Mind's Eye and could use Identify on Ria.

"Dragon's Bloodline huh? That's the same Gift Anaia had. Though it seems you have more skills than Anaia, you still haven't drawn out the power of the Gift."

While casually saying momentous things, Labyrinth filled me in on information from after the Cyclops was defeated.

After Ria fainted, her body was immediately covered by a black shell. In front of the two other confused people, Labyrinth appeared. Labyrinth said that she was the lord of the labyrinth, teleporting the

two and the egg to this area.

Since it was a dragon's egg according to Identify, she recommended to wait and see what happened. The two people agreed.

Before teleporting Maal to the surface and the egg to the bed, they received their rewards. After that, she had reminiscent talk of Japan and the like with Serge, watching him practice magic.

"Reminiscent about Japan? Even though it's been a thousand years..."

Ria's question was reasonable, though Serge already thought that at first. Due to reincarnating into this world, twenty-first century Japanese seemed to be scattered through the ages. When she heard what year Labyrinth died in, it was just a little before Ria.

"I chose the Gift of Genesis Magic. Then by raising my level in the Great War a thousand years ago, my Gift sublimated into Labyrinth Creation. Since then, I've always been training adventurers."

She didn't say explorers. When Labyrinth made this labyrinth, that title was more common.

"Why train them?"

"It will be time for another Great War soon right? In preparation for that, I'm raising the mankind side's strength."

However, she shook her head. It might have been too gentle of her to not allow casualties.

Though they wouldn't lose everything when they die, since she cultivated them at such great pains, she wanted it to be more intense. Though in the last one hundred years, only one person other than Ria's had made it to the final floor.

"By the way, what was that person's name?"

"Not telling. It's personal information. Well, I believe you'll meet them naturally in the Great War."

Though she thought the Ogre King said the person was named Ars, confirming it didn't matter.

She forgot about it due to the reincarnation-related talk, there was something else important.

"There was talk about getting a wish when you capture the labyrinth..."

"By all means, don't hold back. So long as I am capable."

She pretty much confirmed it. Seeing this labyrinth, she could do considerable things.

“In truth, I was a man in my previous life, but...”

You can't return to being a man? Thought Labyrinth, folding her arms and pondering the question.

“This is the first time I've heard of having a different sex than your previous life... That aside, it is easy to become a man. It can be done with magic. Though you don't just want to look like a man, you want to have all functions of a man as well?”

Ria nodded. Labyrinth had an apologetic look.

“If that's it, it is possible. Though, since it requires your genes to be rewritten, you'll have to start over again from a baby...”

Saying in addition to that, there was a high possibility that her memories would disappear.

It was the same as being unreasonably impossible. She expected it, but was still greatly disappointed.

“Then, is there any other way...?”

“No, perhaps...”

There was a small possibility, but before bringing it up, Labyrinth spoke.

“If it's Valis, he might know. He's lived much longer than me, and knows details concerning the Dragon's Bloodline.”

Dark Dragon Valis.

Again, a big name appeared.

The only one of the Five God Dragons that visibly supported humans. Settled in the northwest continent's Labyrinth of Darkness, it's said he is preparing to battle the demons that will soon arrive.

“That Azelford... I wonder if he hasn't died yet? Or that elf, Corfus. The other Five God Dragons are sure to have abundant knowledge as well. There have been a few clues, but I don't know which continents they're on, don't have any expectations. They probably changed their names and faces anyways.”

Azelford was a great sage that took residence at Sacred Mountain Cyrus. Rufus was his apprentice when he was young. For Ria, he was her teacher's teacher.

Corfus lived in the depths of the Oomori Woods at the northeast of the continent, an ancient elf clan. Though he was a legendary figure, he was reasonably favorable towards humans.

Nevertheless, the names of those legendary figures came out like bangs.

Though her name didn't leave its mark on history, Labyrinth might also be a legendary hero.

"Due to that, the wish is impossible. Is there anything else? If you're a warrior, are you not interested in amazing weapons?"

Speaking of a weapon...

"In the fight against the Cyclops, I used all of my weapons, but I wonder if they could be fixed if possible?"

"Eh? I'd do that much for free. Here."

When Labyrinth waved her hand, all of Ria's armor and weapons appeared in front of her. Of course, that included the exploded katana.

It was a bonus that Carlos' crushed and distorted armor was restored as well. The shield wasn't a magic item so it was okay.

"Ah, the magic bag isn't there. Since it's a magic item that uses a bit of power, that needs a wish."

"By the way, what did Serge and Maal get?"

When she asked, Serge proudly took out a thick grimoire.

In the grimoire was written all of the magic known by Labyrinth, including magic lost nowadays. Though he couldn't use it yet, it even had genesis magic, he'd never let it go. It was under a special magic that made it so only Serge could read it.

Maal seemed to receive the ability to use magic. More accurately, it drew out her talent for magic. Having Fairy Eyes, Maal already had aptitude for spirit magic, so it manifested as that. For more information she'd have to ask Maal.

"Simply, I want to be stronger..."

"In order to get stronger, this labyrinth is here. Though this is the ideal environment for strengthening, it's impossible for it to happen instantly."

She had a point.

But Ria was still troubled. When the wish she wanted granted the most became impossible, she couldn't think of another one.

She was the princess of a country after all. If it was something that could be solved by money, she could manage it somehow.

"How about a magic sword? Inexperienced nobles bring them in, there are a lot."

Unfortunately, she didn't excel much at handling swords. Even though

her Swordplay Skill was high, she found katanas more manageable. Katanas were a comparatively minor weapon in this world. There was complexity in its manufacturing process too and almost never existed as a magic weapon.

“Though I want a katana, there probably aren’t many katanas better than this one.”

It was the katana that the Ogre King gave her. But Labyrinth didn’t understand the merits of katanas.

“If you want a katana so much, how about I make one?”

Seeing Ria’s devotion to katanas, Labyrinth proposed such a thing.

What was a katana? It wasn’t something that could be made so easily. Ria knew it well from her previous life.

“That is, with genesis magic. If it’s not a magic item, it’s pretty easy to make.”

“Labyrinth, I was given the chance to see many katanas referred to as famous in my previous life, but to be honest, the katanas of this world are almost nothing compared to the Wazamono.” [TN: [Wazamono](#)]

That’s how it was. Even the katana the Ogre King gave her was incomparable to Nagasone Kotetsu. If she had Nagasone Kotetsu, that fight against the Cyclops would have been effortless.

“If you’ve seen a lot of them, I believe you could make more. The manufacturing method and manufacturing process, do you know them?”

“Of course. Not just once or twice, I’ve actually seen them temper the blade.”

It was to the point she could release a book about it.

“Using genesis magic, you can ultimately manifest your own imagination. If you have your ideal katana inside yourself, you can make it.”

If so, if that’s true, it was definitely attractive.

“I could divide a part of my ability, giving you a magic called Weapon Creation. At worst, you could produce the same katanas that you’ve seen. Ah, magic weapons are still something else though.”

She could make an identical katana. That was sufficiently attractive.

“Then let’s go with that.”

She readily nodded. Labyrinth placed her small hand on Ria’s forehead.

“The ability will flow across for a moment. Be careful not to collapse.”

Along with Labyrinth’s voice, she felt something warm flow into her.

It had the appearance of a flame.

Heating iron, the flame forged it.

It was a nostalgic thing. It was something she yearned for.

Together with the memories filling her mind, Ria was awarded a new ability.

To the Surface

It was a beautiful katana.

“Oooh...”

The blade reflected light as calmly as the moon, while the ridged pattern of the blade reflected a strong and dark brilliance.

“Ooooooh...”

Ria looked at the katana in her hands from various angles, looking at it for who knows how long. At last, she nodded.

“It’s Nagasone Kotetsu.”

After starting to make the sword with genesis magic, half a day had passed.

By the time Ria was finally satisfied with the katana she produced, most of her magical power had been exhausted.

It required tremendous concentration, as well as greatly affecting her endurance, yet she still continued on to make the next one.

This time, she wasn’t focusing on the Nagasone Kotetsu in her hands. She focused on a knife she’d appreciated in a museum.

Using almost the same amount of time, magical power, and endurance, she created it.

“Masamune.”

Again, viewing it from multiple angles, Ria nodded.

In the meantime, Labyrinth asked Serge to teach her magic.

Although Labyrinth could use the ultimate magic called genesis magic, she couldn’t use other types of magic. Since Serge excelled at everything from fire and water magic all the way to space-time

magic, he taught her the techniques.

“Nee-chan, did it work?”

When Serge called out, Ria cheerfully put the produced katana at her waist. She had an expression of satisfaction on her face.

“I’m grateful. With this weapon I won’t be defeated anymore.”

Even her tone was somewhat like a samurai. Labyrinth was also amazed.

“Though I thought you would understand how to use it, imagining it and constructing it is the same as other magic. It’ll likely become faster to make after you are accustomed to it.”

Ria nodded with a smile.

“But I really would like to speak with you again.”

“Same with me. You are the first guest I’ve had in a long time. But don’t you have people waiting for you?”

The three reincarnated people looked at each other’s faces.

“I’ll come back once in a while. Let’s talk about a lot of things when that time comes.”

“That would be nice. Well, since the Great War should be happening soon, I might go out at that time as well.”

The Great War, also called the Millennium, was a clash between demons and mankind. Two thousand years ago and again a thousand years ago, many of the continents became scorched earth. Ages of darkness, reducing the population below a tenth of the current.

“Will it be soon?”

Though Ria was worried as expected, Labyrinth shook her head.

“It will likely happen within this decade. However, what I don’t know is how much power the demons have recovered in the far reaches of their frozen soil.”

The demons always invaded near the Millennium. When humans force them to the other side of the permafrost, it’s a win.

The more the demons could gather their strength, the greater the harm.

“That’s why I want everyone to come to the labyrinth for lots of training.”

Labyrinth shrugged. Since Ria agreed, Ria would talk to her father, the king, about it.

Adding on to that, Labyrinth continued speaking.

“When you return to the surface, don’t reveal my identity. Since she didn’t see my appearance, that includes that kitten-chan. You two reincarnated people are exceptions.”

Though she still wanted to know about things like Labyrinth’s history, since Serge heard about it to some extent, she could get it from him later. Her comrades were certainly waiting anxiously.

“Even so, I have a favor to ask...”

As Labyrinth waved her hand, a huge Hellhound appeared.

With sharp fangs and red eyes, it wagged its tail.

“You tamed this child right?”

“Eh?”

She tamed it? Though she certainly remembered patting one as it rolled over, she couldn’t make out any individual differences.

Panting with its tongue plopped out, it watched Ria in a sitting pose.

“Since it got used to humans, it can’t be used as a labyrinth demon anymore. Though it might be troublesome, will you take it?”

Ria folded her arms and considered the unexpected request.

The Hellhound’s red eyes stared at her.

“Well, it can’t be helped, huh...”

Though the dog had a large build, it could be kept in the royal castle’s garden. It wouldn’t be a problem so long as it didn’t attack anyone. Rufus also made a demon his familiar.

Though the problem would be whether or not the horse was afraid of it, since it’s Matsukaze it probably won’t be a problem. Johnny and Donkey would just have to get accustomed to it.

“Well then, I’ll send you off.”

Ria and Serge got on the Hellhound’s back, who was now wearing a collar. They then waved goodbye to Labyrinth.

Wrapped in a pale light, the animal and two people were teleported.

“Well then, I wonder how much she’ll be able to approach Ars’ strength? It wouldn’t be strange even if the demons held the advantage though...”

Musing to herself, the mischievous fairy smiled.

The real sun began sinking behind the mountains in the west. They were on the slightly elevated hill with the door leading into the labyrinth. It was the place they'd used to teleport with the mirror. There were groups of explorers using it to return near them. Overlooking the flocks of explorers heading to the inn, there was a small curtained tent on the way. The problem was what sat beside the tent; it had the figure of a small cat beastkin.

"Maal?"

Calling out in a quiet voice, Maal reacted in a big way.

"Ria-chan!"

She jumped up and ran to her. However, she stopped on the way. It was understandable since she caught sight of the Hellhound. Ria descended from its back, ushering Maal closer.

Embracing each other, Ria held Maal's sides and hoisted her into the air, spinning round and round.

Maal, who'd had a slightly concerned look on her face, quickly began to smile, laughing loudly.

Of course, the figure of the large Hellhound couldn't not attract the eyes of those coming and going.

"Nee-chan, we're standing out too much."

Serge sighed deeply.

Maal quickly explained what happened after she teleported back to the surface.

When Maal went outside, the three who were crushed by the Cyclops seemed to have woken up in the guild's medical room.

Since those other than the three that had been killed didn't appear, they judged that they'd withdrawn. Looking at it from that point of view, that was natural. After deciding to wait at the guild in shifts, Maal returned.

Lulu, hearing Maal's story and who knew of Ria's absurdities the best, acted like a senior and was of the opinion of waiting.

But Maal, not wanting to spend the time doing nothing, set up a tent here and waited for Ria and the others to return.

On their way back to the mansion speaking about things like that, Ria and Maal held hands. Behind them, Serge just listened in while riding the Hellhound.

Though she wondered about reporting the labyrinth completion to the guild as normal, she thought of the turmoil that would happen, deciding to wait till the next day.

As soon as they returned to the mansion, Lulu showed Ria's leg that had been put on ice. Since she couldn't use magic to recover a completely lost body part, she needed to hold on to it. Of course, she was surprised that the leg had sprouted back.

"Anego is still as awesome as ever."

What's so awesome? Not knowing what happened, Gig was honestly admiring her.

"Since she's the descendant of a dragon, maybe that's why she can regrow her limbs? Even so, returning to normal in a week is too fast."

Lulu said she would incinerate Ria's frozen leg since it became unnecessary.

Since that meant the leg in front of her would be barbecued, it was quite a horror.

"Apart from that, what do we do with that dog?"

"It'll be good if it hunts demons while we travel. After we return to the royal castle it'd probably be fine if it becomes a watchdog?"

Though Ria thought about it simply, Carlos' common sense said they couldn't take a demon to the royal castle. Absolutely not. But lying down wisely, the Hellhound watched and waited in that posture. It couldn't be helped.

"It'll be hard to get Johnny and the others accustomed..."

Saying those words, Carlos accepted that the number of travelling companions would increase.

Returning to the mansion, Klaus was surprised in many ways.

A gigantic Hellhound, a regenerated leg, and a big magic crystal larger than a head that Serge had taken out.

"Well really, in all the time I've lived so far this is the first time I've been so surprised."

It was a considerably restrained way of speaking.

After that, to celebrate the success of their labyrinth exploration,

they decided to hold a party at a later date. By convention, it would be held at the mayor's mansion.

"For a while after tomorrow, the whole city will be in a fuss."

Klaus said so happily. Also wanting to be an explorer when he was a child, he'd studied the sword. Growing up and getting a party together, he challenged the labyrinth. Discouraged by dying early in, he took over after his father.

That was his history.

Entering the large bath leisurely, Ria put Maal on her lap and began to caress her.

"Ah~, baths refresh the spirit!"

"Ria-chan always says that."

Moving Maal in her arms, she embraced her gently.

"It's my favorite phrase~. But I don't think I say it all the time."

"... Ria-chan, did your chest get bigger?"

"Eh?"

Since there was nothing like a bra type of underwear in this world, she didn't notice. But after confirming it herself, they certainly were getting bigger.

Incidentally, it was the same with the length of her clothes as well, they'd become slightly shorter. Apparently, she didn't just regenerate in the egg, but grew as well.

"I see, I've also gotten more beautiful!"

Looking into the full body mirror, Ria admired herself.

And They Traveled Again

Early the next morning, Ria trained with Carlos and Gig as her opponents.

Even though she was already aware, her physical abilities clearly improved. Rather than her status, the Body Strengthening and Bone Strengthening levels included in her Gift improved.

Though due to her height suddenly becoming taller, she couldn't use the techniques she'd learned so far correctly.

"Even though my level went up..."

She didn't feel like she'd become stronger.

Handled bare-handedly by Ria, Gig and Carlos were gasping for breath at her feet.

"Come ooon, seriously, this girl. Since before, even though, she's been strong, at least then, I lost, like normal."

"As expected, Anego."

Carlos used the magic sword that used to be the Specter Knight's, while Gig used his familiar warhammer. However, they were toppled just by Ria fighting barehanded.

Contrasting that, Maal practiced her spirit magic.

"Hmm."

She could see the flow of magic in the air. From inside that, she particularly felt the power of wind, synchronizing her emotions to it.

The wind blew softly, stirring Serge and Lulu's hair.

Opening the grimoire, Serge was eager to develop a method to reduce the magical power required for space magic.

"That's so nice~, I also wanted something~"

Although it was good that Maal's magic could be seen, it was out of her expertise. To begin with, unlike ordinary magic, no one could use it in theory. Lulu really only just studied it.

"Well, if Lulu wants a magic, I'll look it up."

"I already know about it. The problem is magical power and its

configuration.”

In the fight against the Cyclops, Lulu was of no use at all. Though it was the same with everyone else, for Lulu, who appointed herself as Ria’s protector in her heart, she felt ashamed.

It can’t be helped. Though Serge thought that, he couldn’t explain it to Lulu since she didn’t know about their previous lives nor the Gift’s details.

“Well for the time being, it’s going to be busy for a while.”

Comforting them like that, Carlos whose stocks should have risen just caused the boy, who was over thirty years old including his previous life, to sigh like an old man.

As expected, it caused a fuss. Also as expected, it was more than they expected.

Along with taking the sixth floor’s guardian’s magic crystal to the guild, Serge announced the space-time magic he’d been concealing until now, saying he was awarded it from the lord of the labyrinth.

Though it was fine since the mayor, Klaus, already knew about it, a parade would be formed on the main street. It would take up a lot of time.

They left it to Carlos and Lulu to follow the procedures, but since they were dead when the final guardian was defeated, it mainly turned into Ria and Serge speaking from there on.

“A Cyclops... is it?”

Hearing that, the guild master who was listening became speechless.

“Yeah. Since neither swords nor magic were effective it was troublesome.”

Since Ria gave the explanation like that, it was natural he’d have questions.

“Then how did you defeat it?”

“I got eaten on purpose, cutting it up from inside its stomach.”

Serge looked at the guild master, who was lost for words. I should have aimed for the inside of the mouth as well, he thought after the fact.

The pastries they ate while talking were delicious.

That afternoon, a grand labyrinth exploration was declared in front of the guild.

The next day's parade was announced during the banquet at town hall.

The town's influential people and merchants continually chased Carlos in hopes of meeting Ria's group.

Influential people among explorers turned up, wanting to hear the story. The wizards went to Lulu and the warriors to Gig. Both of them looked like adults on the outside.

Though flirtatious men tried to approach Ria with the wrong idea, they backed off in droves after she gave a demonstration of breaking a sword with her bare hands.

Maal was also popular. Originally living in Labyrinth City for so long, she gathered a lot of beastkin explorers. She had good communication skills.

Serge was leisurely. Though he was surrounded by Onee-san explorers for some reason, he was pampered. No matter how you looked at Ria, she was jealous.

Even though they were finally liberated by evening, Klaus told them their schedule for the next day while seated for dinner. It was going to be another long day.

Brushing Matsukaze, taking the Hellhound for a walk, and massaging Maal's paws, her mind healed.

"Nee-chan, now that I think of it, what's the dog's name?"

Serge asked while patting the fluffy Hellhound without reservation. If they called it Hellhound it'd be inconvenient.

"I decided on a name. It's Rudolph."

"Such a self-important name came out—!"

Though he thought a Japanese name would come out for sure, his expectations were off the mark.

"I mean, see? Doesn't he look like a Rudolph?"

Certainly, with his bared teeth and huge figure, he wasn't inferior to the name.

Though it looked like a puppy when it rolled on its back in front of Ria. Patting him as though in agreement, Serge did so delightedly.

The following day, they carried out the parade in the morning, doing the ceremony at noon.

Moreover, from the next day on, they received party invitations from influential people every day.

Though more and more people knew their faces, the question was whether becoming famous in a small town away from Casalia Kingdom had any meaning.

And so, Ria revealed her identity.

Like an ordinary explorer, Ria tried to be known as a daredevil that borrowed the royal family's power.

But it was a failure.

That caused the big shots in town to try and contact Ria with the purpose of trying to get the explorers to enter government service.

Ria, who had been gathering a considerable amount of stress, rushed into the labyrinth with a party before dueling them so that it'd be safe when they died.

Meanwhile, the young trio tried to raise their levels a bit more and get some income, entering the labyrinth by themselves.

It was easy up to the sixth floor, but the seventh floor turned out to be difficult. Though Serge could use cure and restoration while Lulu wasn't there, their decisions came too late since the people they were accustomed to weren't there.

Even though Lulu and Carlos joined in to capture it before long as well, they were still stopped by the Dogazer on the eighth floor.

With weapons made of metal, Carlos who acted as the protector couldn't fight. Even though Gig could fight with a club, it didn't turn out well after being put to sleep.

Even so, focusing on the fifth and sixth floor, they continued trying to raise their levels and skill masteries.

Ria became like a Shura, thirsting for blood. [TN: [You get the picture.](#)]

Warriors seeking a match with her, even though she made it as hard for them to die as possible, were easily cut down.

Obtaining a good katana, it was the right situation for her to get drunk on blood.

However, during morning and night practice, she mysteriously turned into polite person.

Even if she was drunk on blood, she wasn't drunk on power. She had to draw the line somewhere.

And so, one month passed.

Though they felt like time moved too quickly, after receiving various invitations, time passed by imperceptibly.

In order to memorize their new skills, they all partied up and captured up to the ninth floor again. They didn't bother trying to fight the Cyclops again. With the little bit of intelligence Labyrinth gave it, they probably wouldn't have won with the same method.

The same day they easily killed the Hydra, they informed Klaus they would be leaving the city.

"Is that so, are you returning home?"

Though Klaus sounded somewhat reluctant, his expression changed from Ria's following words.

"No, we're going to go challenge the Dark Labyrinth next."

Even though the members had already heard, the mood became serious again.

The Dark Labyrinth. The most difficult labyrinth on the continent, Dark Dragon Valis resided within.

Only one group had explored it so far. That was Casalia's founder, Leyte Anaia, and her comrades. In addition that happened a thousand years ago, so the details were unknown.

Though they could probably learn a little more if they went to Casalia's Royal Library, if they returned now, the eyes watching her would become stricter and it would become difficult to get away. Apart from Ria, it was hard for the others.

"Since it's different than this labyrinth, please be careful."

Klaus said so in a genuinely concerned tone.

After arranging to depart the rest of the day, the group left Labyrinth City early the following morning.

Starting with Klaus, before they knew it everyone who was on good terms with explorers also came to the walls to see them off.

Waving until they disappeared from sight, the party advanced with their rattling carriage.

... I wonder if a carriage is alright? Though the box-shaped carriage was being pulled, the one pulling was Rudolph the Hellhound.

Maal sat in the driver's seat, while Gig and Serge sat inside.

Though they tried to use normal horses at first, no coach horse could get accustomed to Rudolph. Even Lulu's Donkey still feared it.

Only Matsukaze played around with him on equal footing. It was amazing that a horse was equal to a Hellhound though.

"Well then, on to the Dark Labyrinth!"

As the warm wind signalling the end of Spring blew, Matsukaze shook his mane.

Under the blue sky, Ria's voice was one of a person in high spirits, resounding through the distant hills.

Slave Hunters

Nothing noteworthy happened in the week following their departure from Labyrinth City.

Drawing near a small village on their way, they asked for goods, replenishing their food stocks.

Though demons attacked a few times, even ignoring Rudolph, Matsukaze turned them into experience points with his hooves.

... Though it was questionable that a real horse could have that much fighting strength, Serge's Identify confirmed it was a horse.

"I don't think there are enough events."

Serge spoke abruptly. It was a bit dangerous for him to stand in the driver's seat.

"Events?"

Gig asked in response. He was also bored on this journey. The monsters were too weak. Most of them ran from Rudolph's presence.

As though he were suffering, Serge said in a serious tone.

"Yeah. For instance, a princess and her close friend saving a noble's carriage from an attack, that kind of event."

Aah... Carlos laughed sarcastically. He drew his horse near Serge.

"If only it were like that. If there were any problems, a traveling knight would solve them. Though following that pattern he'd be wed to the princess."

"See! We're traveling in especially remote areas, yet nothing like that's happening."

"Things like that don't actually happen. Ignoring that this area is mostly noble territory, these are just self-supporting villages. Whenever nobles travel in carriages, they'd always have guards."

Though Carlos said that, Serge gave an example that didn't refute it.

"Isn't she a princess with only a single escort? I'm talking about the exceptions!"

There were reckless royalty like Ria, but they were also trouble.

“It’d be good for you to train your magic if you have so much free time. You went to great lengths for you to get that new Skill.”

Ria said while amazed. Though they couldn’t train in the sword while riding, he could probably practice magic inside the wagon.

The new Skill that Serge obtained was something like Magical Power Cost Reduction. He acquired it by practicing to the limit every day. When the Skill’s level increases, supposedly it would make using magic take less magical power. A coveted Skill for magicians. In fact, Lulu was envious.

Magic was definitely interesting. Especially now that he’d obtained the grimoire, Serge’s status as a magician visibly rose every day.

However, training all the time was tedious. At this point, it strained his mind even though the ten-year old also had a previous life.

He may have been childish to begin with, though.

“Magic, huh... Right, I’ve been practicing space-time magic and magic theory...”

Probably since she struck a chord or something, Serge began to grumble to himself.

“Are you going to quiet down from that? Though we’re going on horses, it’s bright under the sun.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah... alright.”

A pale magical power extended from Serge sitting in the seat next to her on the driver’s seat.

“Ah...”

Maal, who was training her spirit magic, let out a sound. Her concentration was disrupted.

But Serge was also concentrating his mind, trying to confirm the effectiveness of his magic.

Ria somehow understood what the magic was. Making the magical power as thin as possible and spreading it out as far as possible, it was probably to know what happened inside. Combining Magical Power Detection and Spatial Grasp, it was a pretty advanced magic.

“Huh?”

Serge, who had shut his eyes, suddenly opened them wide.

“Ah~, there’s an army crossing the hills and forest ahead of us.”

(You can see things that far away?)

Though she was impressed, the army was a problem.

“An army? How many people? Do you know their weapons?”

Ria checked. Though the area around there shouldn't be part of a nation, it might have been a tribe's troops.

“Twenty cavalry, one hundred infantry... four carriages, prisoners... no, slaves? It's like a convoy but...”

“Cordova's slave hunters!”

Maal shouted suddenly. Together with her own unpleasant memories, it corresponded to her current existence.

“Cordova... that place really isn't a good country.”

Ria groaned while enduring what looked like a headache. As a militaristic nation of humans, Cordova absorbed more and more of its nearby tribes and nations. Though it was a law-abiding country, it wasn't forbidden for them to enslave people from other countries.

“What should we do?”

Carlos asked with a complicated expression. Originally, it would have been an opponent they shouldn't come in contact with.

But since Ria knew of them, he believed there wouldn't be such a simple conclusion.

“Ria-chan...”

Seeing Maal's cute and round eyes, Ria's judgement greatly erred towards emotion.

“I'll scout it out first. I'm going to go a bit ahead.”

With a shout, Ria had Matsukaze gallop.

“Though I think it's going to turn into a massacre, I'm just scouting for now.”

Ria had a dangerous smile when she said that. Her eyes weren't smiling.

The army was taking a short break at a watering hole, it was definitely a slave hunt. There were around fifty humans and beastkin crammed inside wood-framed cages.

“I'm going to help them, who's with me?”

Maal quickly raised her hand, followed by Serge and Gig. The two older people were reluctant, but they also raised their hands.

“You’re fine with it?”

Though Ria was surprised, Lulu and Carlos exchanged glances and smiled wryly.

“Since we can’t stop you, it’s better to stay with you.”

With that said, Ria’s serious face cleared up.

Since the army was advancing towards them, they discussed how to deal with them in specifics.

“Now, there’s a problem.”

Ria raised a finger. Though there were several problems, she thought this was the most important one.

“Among us, has anyone killed someone?”

Right, that was it.

They were fighting against an army. In addition, this wasn’t in the Immortal Labyrinth. Honestly, though it was hard to think they would sustain damage here with their levels, it wasn’t likely they would be able to stop them so conveniently without killing them.

“I’ve exterminated a few thieves on the frontier.”

Seeing that Carlos was a soldier, he had experience. No one else. Even Ria, she’d only killed people with the premise that they’d revive in Labyrinth City.

“Serge, are you okay?”

Taking his previous life’s values into consideration, she called out to him in particular since she thought he would have an especially hard time killing people.

“Well, I’ll be shooting magic from a distance. I’ll get used to it. I’ll aim at the knights and not the soldiers as much as possible.”

Ten years of being reincarnated. In a world where human life was cheap, he’d have to get accustomed to it somehow.

After that, they planned their attack.

Their purpose was simply to secure the slaves. If they just released them haphazardly, it would probably be difficult for them to return to their original communities. They would take a lot of effort to send them off.

“Horses and food are absolutely necessary.”

Carlos and Ria set up the strategy. Serge also made an appearance.

“We should attack at night. I don’t want to hit you all on accident as

much as possible.”

“I want the cavalry to be dealt with as much as possible. They might have a main force somewhere.”

They verified the minimum horse feed and food required.

“We’ll beat those guys down in one hit.”

In the case of Serge’s magic, it would take one blow to kill. Though he confirmed it with the magic Identify, their highest level was thirty. They wouldn’t be able to endure it.

As the sun went down, the light of campfires from inside the camp illuminated the night’s darkness.

Ria stood on the hill overlooking the army camp.

There was still some time until midnight. Although there were troops standing guard, they didn’t seem to be very vigilant. There were strong demons in the area, but they were careless. Probably due to their numbers.

“Alright, shall we go?”

Magic covered the warriors. Leaving the carriage and horses, Rudolph was left to guard. Already having moved around, Maal stood on the side the slaves were at.

They slowly descended the hill. They used magic on their armor so that it wouldn’t give off any metallic sounds.

Counting to ten, Serge and Lulu used Exploding Fireball.

The fireballs exploded on the tents and sentry lights.

It was a one-sided slaughter.

The cavalry that tried to escape on their horses were sliced in two from Serge’s space-time magic. Aiming at the groups of people that tried to band together, Lulu’s Fireball burst.

Running in, Ria’s group cut down the knights that attempted to take command. Though one person planned to leave, their circumstances didn’t allow them to keep count.

There was the smell of blood and entrails, as well as the smell of burning flesh. Plumes of smoke filled the area, promoting chaos.

“Savage!”

The enemies shouted. They probably recognized Gig's appearance. The soldiers shouted, but Gig's warhammer turned them into lumps of meat.

Carlos moved while continuing to check the surroundings so that he didn't fall behind. Since Gig moved impulsively, he followed him.

Ria seemed to move as she pleased, choosing her opponents. Some were knocked down by her hands, the remainder being cut down.

Ria was surprised at how calm and strange she was.

Nothing here gave her elation from fighting. It was strange that she killed people like a machine.

She wondered why she didn't feel any guilt. Though she was used to killing due to the Goblins and Orcs, maybe it was the same with humans?

She suddenly noticed.

Those guys didn't treat the slaves as humans, so she didn't treat them as humans.

If this were a battlefield, rather than having feelings of guilt, it was probably better to be in high spirits to drown it all out.

The soldiers in front of her eyes also had a life, even if she thought they could have families, her katana didn't stop.

Though she could cut through their armor, she tried to hit their vitals and necks as much as possible. She didn't have a hobby of making people suffer.

Not having decent equipment, the soldiers ran. Aiming at their backs, Ria shot fire arrows without holding back.

Their opponents aimed to flee after already losing their fighting spirit. They decided to let the infantry go. Even if they ran away, they were likely to die by demon attacks without food and equipment. They didn't bother taking prisoners.

Less than an hour after beginning the attack, the battle ended.

They put an end to enemies that were suffering. They tied the two fainted knights up and left them.

The soldiers that had just fainted were lucky, they were left alone. Their objective wasn't annihilation.

Coming down from the hill, Serge vomited after seeing the

devastation.

Even Lulu held her mouth, but she managed to endure it.

As expected, Carlos endured it with a solemn expression. Maybe due to his race, Gig didn't seem to have much trouble with what happened.

"Now then, it's going to be troublesome after this."

Ria muttered. There was no damage as planned. However, the problem was here.

While looking at the slaves that had been placed on the carriage, Ria sighed deeply.

Occupational Mercenaries

There was a lot to do. They couldn't go without putting things into order.

First, the slaves were released from their confinement in the wagons. Since finding the key would have been troublesome, she slashed the wooden cages open with her katana.

After confirming that everyone was in good condition, they were given meals and let to use the restroom and rest.

Most were youths, but there were children as well. Though they were mostly male, all of the women had good appearances to some extent.

After checking it out, forty-eight people came from the same village and four were livestock breeders staying in the village from nearby. The majority were beastkin, the rest humans.

"Thankfully there're humans that can deal with the wagons."

Ria nodded at Carlos' words. If there weren't any, Carlos and Ria would have had to get off their horses and guide the wagons.

They were asked the details as to how they were enslaved, but they couldn't help being completely resentful.

Suddenly being attacked by an army in the early morning, they were arbitrarily declared to be conscripted into the army. More so, they gathered up women to act as servants.

They said that people who resisted were killed.

They'd already verified it, but the soldiers were definitely from Cordova. They said their village didn't belong to Cordova and that it was an independent village. Also that it hadn't belonged to any nations since a long time ago.

While they were free from other nations, that also meant they couldn't defend against military forces.

"Couldn't the country of Casalia defend them? Though they might have to pay taxes, it's probably better than being slaves instead."

Ria and Carlos both shook their heads from hearing Serge's opinion.

First of all, this area was too far away from Casalia, and it was a problem that there were independent tribal nations on the way. They couldn't afford to dispatch troops to defend a single village.

"It'd be good if the Ogre King made a country though. Then they could belong to it."

Ria muttered it, but knew it wasn't realistic. Ogres never formed countries to begin with. At best they would form tribal alliances, and even so, they were just Ogre villages.

Besides, although Labyrinth City was a major force in the area, they wouldn't assume leadership of the people and form a country. They wanted to remain as a city-state as they have so far. Though it seemed that the surrounding settlements more or less belonged to it, supplying food, they didn't appear to take a tax.

But thinking about things that would happen later, if a big country isn't established in this area, it would very likely be swallowed by Cordova sooner or later.

"When I return, I'll need to talk to father about this area."

Though she went on a journey to improve as a warrior, she took many things into consideration.

Carlos woke the fainted knight to interrogate him.

The first thing he did was scream, but just by seeing Gig in front of him he became obedient.

Then, they found out that the slave hunting wasn't performed as a thing for the country. To get some extra money for himself, their district troops' commander was trying to sell slaves to Labyrinth City. Knowing that they didn't need to take on a whole country as their opponent, they were honestly relieved. Still, the scale of the battalion from Cordova's military consisted of one thousand infantry and two hundred cavalry. At worst, they may take notice of their movements.

"Well, hunting for slaves without permission, if he got away with these losses he would just get executed."

Though Carlos tried to comfort her, he didn't know what would really happen.

"For now, should we head to the village? It's the middle of the night, but I don't want to stay here."

The knight who obediently gave the information was left with just his weapon and released. As expected killing an enemy who couldn't resist was against Ria's sense of beauty. Since they didn't provide

him with a horse, he would also take a while to join up with the main force.

Riding on Rudolph's back in the lead, Ria lead the mass of people to the village.

The village was on a small hill. Surrounded by a fence, it was protected against damage from beasts. Though if their opponents were the ferocious demons, it wouldn't be very useful.

The villagers were thankful when the ones who had become slaves were returned. There were about one hundred houses. Judging from the sizes of the houses, the village had around five hundred people. (Other than those in their prime, they only took the women that looked good.)

They couldn't couldn't oppose the army.

Borrowing an empty house, the group rested.

Only Carlos was called to the chief's house, conveying what developments might happen in the future.

Would the army come? Would it not? How would they respond if they came? It wasn't for a child like Ria to talk about it. Normally.

And so Ria, who held the power to make decisions for the group, was sharpening her katana in the garden.

"It's a nice color..."

She was muttering absent-mindedly as she looked at Nagasone Kotetsu.

The ferrite's color was a calm brightness, the blade's edge shining, though not too much. Though it had killed people, there weren't any nicks in the blade.

After carefully wiping away the applied liquid, she sheathed it. Then she looked at the dagger.

She only looked at this one. Because she didn't use it.

Masamune was specified as a national treasure in her past life. Though she didn't think it was reproduced entirely, its appearance was beautiful.

Though she didn't think she had to confirm something like its durability, if she showed it to any master blacksmith, it would be

quite a story.

Serge trembled from the shadows as he watched Ria gaze at her katanas.

“Though I already knew it, Nee-chan is scary.”

“Ria’s been like that for a long time. Rather than dresses and jewelry, she prefers weapons.”

Lulu was laying down. To recover her magical power even a little faster, she had taken a comfortable posture.

According to the story Lulu knew, Ria, who was recognized as the country’s princess, received various gifts from her father and nobles. Though even if she admired the skillful work put into the jewelry, they didn’t make her eyes sparkle. She immediately gave them away to ladies-in-waiting and friends to improve relations.

On a certain occasion, when she was given a dagger to train with by the royal master blacksmith for self defense, you could see her whole face turn into a smile as she looked at the shine of the blade.

After she joined in with the knights’ training, almost half of the gifts she received were some kind of weapon or armor.

Concentrating now, she tried to create a new katana from her mind.

Creating a sword from an image. It was a great Japanese sword.

As she unsheathed it from the long scabbard, the blade she imagined appeared.

That is, on the surface it did.

“Gig, hold this.”

” ‘Kay.”

Gig held the katana that was just created horizontally. Meanwhile, Ria held up Nagasone Kotetsu, swinging it down without much force. Kiiin... After letting out a high-pitched sound, the katana held by Gig broke apart and flew.

“Ah, it’s a failure after all then.”

She sighed. Nagasone Kotetsu’s blade wasn’t damaged at all.

“Nee-chan, you’re already giving up? I mean, isn’t the katana like its original in the first place?”

Though Serge, who knew the story of the katana, said that, Ria knew the anecdote and didn’t give in.

When she can make the real thing, it should be be no worse than Nagasone Kotetsu.

“Is solidifying the image without swinging it or cutting with it no good after all? Or maybe it’s an issue that I don’t know how it was made...”

Grumbling, though Ria tried to make the katana again, Carlos returned with the chief so she stopped for now.

“Ojou, there’s a bit to talk about.”

According to their established setting, since she’s a noble with guards, Carlos wanted Ria’s opinion as a matter of course.

Standing in front of Ria, the man gave a ruggedly honest elderly feeling.

When they entered the house, the village chief started giving his request.

“Defend the village... huh.”

“Yes, though according to talk it’s not normal army movement, after something like that...”

The village chief spoke in a feeble tone. He hoped that they could be in charge of defense as mercenaries, as well as hoping they’d teach the villagers how to fight.

In the short term at least. Ria couldn’t afford to be held up here for long. That being the case, for the sake of the village’s defense afterwards, they would teach the villagers that could fight how to use weapons.

Use your own body to protect yourself. Though that was natural in this world, being resolute enough to do so was desirable.

But there was a problem. That was how long it would take.

“If about half a month is fine, we’ll do it. However, what of the reward...?”

The village was basically self-sufficient, so it didn’t have much money stocked up. And due to rescuing the villagers from the slave hunting, considering that their horses and wagons were claimed, they couldn’t pay much.

Honestly, Ria would be fine doing it free of charge, but she wouldn’t do it and be Mito Komon, resolving each and every problem that would arise in the future.

“For the time being, how about a meal? If a need to fight comes up, with the money in the village, the first thing necessary is to pay for our meals.”

Though the village chief was surprised after hearing such a

convenient condition, for them, they weren't lacking for cash in the first place and food was good enough.

If they would obtain something from this, rather than being paid, it was experience. If Cordova's army attacks with a battalion, it would already become a war and they would repel it.

She had the Gift. Divine Protection of the War God. That Gift's specialty in war might finally see the light of day.

On that day, Ria made a massive amount of long spears with genesis magic.

Katanas were things that didn't have much use on the battlefield in the first place. If the conditions were suitable, Ria would use spears a lot.

In this case, for the villagers who were unaccustomed to fighting, though large spears could keep a distance from the opponents, fear was difficult to embrace, so there was an advantage in having easy maneuverability.

Though it was true that bows were better for that, taking into consideration how long it would take to train them, she chose spears in the end.

Making about one hundred spears for the time being, she went to the house's garden and built a bath.

Baths refreshed the spirit. Because they were planning on staying for several days, she built a bigger bath than usual since it was long-awaited.

Pulling in the reluctant Lulu, the three girls entered the bath.

"Hmm~, Lulu's boobs have good shapes after all~!"

"W-why are you saying that so loudly!"

Giving damage to Carlos mentally, the night grew late.

Battle for the First Time

Training began the next day.

That said, since the village's men were also its labor force, they couldn't afford to only train. They could just devote early mornings and the evening to it at best.

The coach was Carlos. Ria didn't participate in training the group's training. Even in her previous life, she had nothing but the knowledge in her head.

But as a knight, Carlos had personally experienced subjugating thieves. Moreover, since he's a knight, he had experience leading and fighting with soldiers.

And even going by appearance, Carlos clearly looked like a knight so the villagers obeyed him.

"Be that as it may, where did all these spears come from..."

"Magic."

Carlos answered the village chief's question in a tone that refused speaking more of it. He was similar to Ria in things like that.

The five others undertook strengthening the defenses of the village itself.

Cutting down the trees surrounding the hillock, their view was improved. Ria tried out her new katana on the tree trunks, cutting through many of them. Gig also helped after shifting his grip on his axe, while Serge stored the lumber with space-time magic to transport the harvest.

Lulu and Maal were further away, setting up traps on slopes leading to the village. Maal, who had hunted for her own village, drew things out of her memory to help correct the village's hunters. Though they wouldn't be lethal, it might be enough to deprive them of fighting strength.

"Hmmm, though the trial went well..."

Ria was dissatisfied. She couldn't create a better katana than Nagasone Kotetsu, the first one she created and one she'd

personally held in her previous life. Though it was the same as Nagasone Kotetsu, just sharper, she couldn't tune it.

Still, it was a much sharper katana than the one she'd gotten from the Ogre King, as expected from something called genesis magic.

Since there were just tiny openings, Serge reinforced the fencing by covering it with a magic wall of soil. Though it wasn't that strong, with this it could block arrows.

In the end though, the training was mostly meaningless.

Midday after just two days, Ria sensed troops coming from the distance.

One of her Gifts was the Divine Protection of the War God, allowing her to sense the presence of masses of soldiers. Though it was definitely a cheat since it prevented surprise attacks, this was the first time it had been useful.

"Serge, sound the alarm."

"Roger."

When Serge informed them using space-time magic, the villagers sounded the alarm. It was even made of metal parts from Ria's magic. The bell rang loudly, getting villagers out in the fields to seek shelter within the mud wall.

When signs of the enemy appeared at the top of the hill, the village had already completely readied its defensive system.

Every man who could fight had either a spear or a bow, outfitting themselves in armor. Despite this being their first fight, their faces weren't painted with fear.

(I wonder, is this the power of the Gift...?)

When she secretly used Identify, their abilities had went up across the board. It was probably the other effects described in the Gift.

(My soldiers...)

Her blood was boiling. Even if it might become a life and death struggle after this, she didn't feel guilty for it.

This. This was the nature of war. To keep their dignity as people, to keep their independence, they had to fight.

Looking from the top of the lookout, there was a single horseman coming.

Maintaining a sufficient distance from the village, he started giving a

speech.

For some reason, this village had not paid tax up to now. They were drafting the villagers as an alternative. If they resisted, they would be punished for treason.

If Ria knew the real reason, she would probably laugh with scorn at them.

Due to their slave hunt failing, moreover losing a large amount of soldiers, they were trying to come up with a pretext for it somehow.

Trying to commandeer things like rations, those that resisted were exterminated. They lost soldiers in the process.

Though she doubted they would escape from them carrying out punishment with that pretext, it seemed a battle was inevitable.

She reviewed their victory conditions.

To the last, the Cordova soldiers had to dominate this village and pin it as part of the country.

It was already just to try and save the commanding officer's own neck, they needed a scapegoat. Then all she had to do was kill the commander. After that the officer would probably withdraw the soldiers.

If they still didn't retreat, she would thoroughly kill all of their commanders. If just soldiers were left, they would run away without taking leadership.

And another important thing, minimize the damage taken by allies.

If possible, don't let a single person be killed. In order for that, she made the spears and the earthen wall was erected. If even a single person died, it would be difficult to be seen off smiling.

"First of all, should I kill that person with the loud voice...?"

Ria created an oversized Fireball, aimed at the solitary knight continuing to give his speech, and fired.

After the knight turned into a pillar of fire, the battle began.

Although Cordova's army shot from their bows, the village was on a hill to begin with. Because the earthen wall was made, they wouldn't take damage unless they blundered greatly.

(Poor horse...)

She didn't regret killing the person at all. Jumping from the lookout, Ria leapt onto the earthen wall.

The arrows concentrated towards the figure that suddenly appeared. However, not a single one hit.

Though the wind was weak, the shots all went astray. Maal used her spirit magic.

Cordova soldiers climbed the slope towards the village. A few of the bows from here found their mark. Some of them were repelled by their armor, but it decreased their enemy's numbers somewhat.

Serge's magic burst in the area where the enemy gathered on the path. Excalibur was shot horizontally, dissecting the entire enemy unit, as well as leaving a huge scar on the ground.

The enemy was no longer able to assault from the front. Avoiding the road, they spread around to both sides at the gates.

(Though it would have been serious if the enemies had a magician, but isn't it an easy win like this...?)

Just how much damage had the villagers avoided taking?

Ria looked towards the enemy's base.

From the top of the lookout, he just continued to fire off Exploding Fireballs, simple work.

Seeing the fleeting image of large shields being prepared, Serge shot magic.

He dropped a Fireball where people were gathering in groups. Not even armor or shields could prevent the flames. This was more efficient than rapidly firing off Excalibur.

"I've gotten used to this huh..."

He muttered. He really had grown accustomed to killing people.

Originally, there wasn't much guilt from killing with magic. Holding memories of his previous life like Ria, it was more abnormal to kill people with weapons and feel the resistance in your own hands while maintaining your calm.

Nevertheless, there still was some guilt. Those soldiers could have been commoners like Serge, gathered up. In order to kill them, he

needed some excuse.

Ria ordered him.

He was ordered, so he is killing them.

When all of the responsibility was taken from him, even if it was just the official story, even if it was just an excuse, Serge's guilt was offloaded.

Additionally, this was a defensive battle. Not a fight of aggression.

For self-defense, he would protect everyone's everyday life. Therefore, he would fight.

Serge didn't notice that he was also inside of the range of Ria's Gift.

Carlos and Gig were each like non-commissioned officers, taking command in order to eliminate enemy soldiers as they tried to scale over the earthen wall.

Carlos would shoot arrows at enemies that occasionally appear over the wall. Gig was even better with throwing stones.

Maal asked the wind to weaken the arrows' strengths, doing her best to concentrate. Lulu waited on standby for medical duties. She really wanted to use offensive magic, but Ria prohibited it.

At any rate, there wasn't much friendly damage.

Against the enemy forces that exceeded one thousand, it was a miracle.

However, it might have been possible if it was Ria. He thought so as well.

About nine hundred enemies spread around the village to surround it. At best, there were about two hundred prepared for combat on the friendly side. Even so, they were just amateurs that could barely be called troops.

However, morale was high.

Considering that they would defend their village under normal circumstances, they were also under the influence of Ria's Gift. If it came to a fight, it'd probably be neck and neck.

However, being on par with each other was no good.

They would lose a large number of people. If they invaded the village, they would definitely suffer damage. That couldn't be called victory.

Therefore, she would crush their head.

“Time to go?”

Getting off of the earthen wall, she hopped on Matsukaze that she'd prepared. Matsukaze was wearing horse armor. Though it was made based on her memories, it would probably be useful. In order to not increase the weight, Ria was wearing her usual leather armor. Then, Ria charged together with Rudolph. Could a standard soldier stop the power of a level 45 demon?

“Open the gate.”

A villager hurriedly unfastened the latch. Then, Ria rode out on Matsukaze.

Just one horseman.

No, including Rudolph, one horseman and one animal.

Rudolph leading, the soldiers were sent flying by his large body. Cordova's soldier's weapon was a common pike, but it couldn't pierce Rudolph's fur and body.

Following behind, Matsukaze galloped.

Ria held a cross spear with a long handle, killing soldiers that got in the way. Though horsemen sometimes came at them, they couldn't get close enough to fight against Ria.

Finally nearing the top of the hill, she saw the commander being defended by infantry. Since Cordova's commanders wore red cloaks, she immediately knew who it was.

He had an incredible countenance. Definitely someone who had encountered true monsters on the battlefield.

“Y-you son of a bitch, the fuck are you!”

“Want to know!?”

Her spear flashed. The battalion commander's neck was severed.

The surrounding knights, probably officers, didn't have time to react.

The battalion commander's body tumbled off his horse. Finally reacting, they brandished their weapons toward Ria.

“The one responsible for the slave hunt is dead. Still eager?”

Rotating her spear, it audibly sliced through the air. Behind her, Rudolph overran the infantry.

Companion to a Hellhound, killing their commander in a single blow, she was still a young girl. Even if they lowered their visors, she understood by the voice.

“The fuck are you!?”

If was the same question as the commander, this time from a senior

officer. Probably the adjutant. Ria answered properly this time.

"I am a hired mercenary for this village. I don't intend to give my name."

Feeling Ria's intimidation, the officers drew back, the horses frightened. The horses understood the feelings of their riders.

And this adjutant was a wise man. Having grown old, he knew there were existences one shouldn't act against.

"Sound the bells of retreat. We will return to the garrison."

"That's better."

Ria turned the horse around, running down the hill. This time, Rudolph followed behind.

The euphoria of running through a battlefield pulled her. The sounds of bells rang in a constant rhythm from the top of the hill.

It echoed throughout the entire battlefield, signalling the end of the fight.

Cordova's soldiers pulled back.

Within them, a single horseman dressed in black returned to the village.

Cheers of joy sprang up from the village. While listening to them, the only thing on Ria's mind was if anyone had died.

Journey

One month has passed since the fight with the Cordova army. Ria and the rest of her group were heading to the city nearest the Dark Labyrinth, Jaeburg.

They'd left the village half a month after the fight ended. Fortunately, none of the injured villagers died. It could be called a complete victory.

Although the village chief still looked anxious, they knew they couldn't stay there forever. So after a month of not receiving any news, something was probably being dealt with in Cordova. The person responsible was dead.

The journey couldn't be called safe.

Bandits were in the mountainous area, assailing them despite the Hellhound. Of course, they only had strength to the point where the one Hellhound could take them out.

They lacked the fighting strength to attack the four mages that were also in the party. Ria mercilessly beheaded the bandits that were pleading for their lives.

Apart from Ria killing the pleading bandits in the fight, there was nothing for Serge and Maal to do at all.

"Ojou, it's fine even if you don't dirty your hands you know?"

Though when Carlos said that, Ria gave a wry smile.

"To dirty your own hands, I think that's the fate of nobility."

"That's..."

"Besides, Carlos."

This time, Ria spoke with a real smile.

"For me, it seems I like to kill people."

Carlos was speechless.

"Don't worry. When I kill, I won't kill anyone other than those who deserve death."

When he realized she was speaking seriously, Carlos felt cold sweat on his back.

Ria doted on her literal cat, Maal.

Fearing that her comrades would be hurt, Ria fought alone.

Angry at the slave hunters, Ria tried to help even after knowing the danger.

That is, she liked killing people.

She probably wanted to keep it to herself. However, Carlos wouldn't consent to it and talked to Lulu.

Needless to say, Lulu had known Ria the longest of them. And therefore could be said to be the closest to Ria's true nature.

After thinking for a while, Lulu sighed.

"You probably don't need to be concerned about Ria. Besides, she would absolutely never raise her hand against a harmless person."

"Concerned, is it?"

"You too, weren't you reluctant to kill them after losing their will to fight even though they were bandits?"

That certainly was the case, Carlos scratched his head.

Though it had become a bit of a good story, honestly, the reason why Ria killed those people was much simpler.

She was trying out her new blade.

"Muu... the blade was chipped just from being tested... Not good enough."

As for what Ria tried out, it was what she created by picturing and making a katana from an even older period than Nagasone Kotetsu.

She didn't particularly know much of the manufacturing process of the old katanas from her previous life. To begin with, even the refinement method of the iron was a complete mystery.

Though the time period was different from Nagasone Kotetsu's, the katana actually felt like an extension of her hand, it was properly created.

"So, do you have any hints?"

This time, Ria wasn't consulting Carlos or Lulu, but Serge.

"No, though they were in things like games and manga, I don't know much about katanas."

Though he knew he was being seriously consulted, he was a bit troubled.

“Usually, materials used for weapons production is oricalchum or mithril.”

Oricalchum and mithril were both magic metals. The genesis magic Ria had couldn't produce those materials.

“How about adamantite?”

“In this world, that's just an alloy of iron.”

“Umm, vermillionite?”

“Still a bit softer than mithril. It's fine if it's imbued with magic though.”

“Nothing else is coming to mind... There were things like titanium and tungsten in our last lives though...”

“A katana be made out of a titanium and iron alloy in the first place.”

“That so? I thought they could only be made out of iron.”

Unexpectedly, even Serge didn't know that, but that might be ordinary. Even among swordsmen, apart from the sword's quality, few were particular about the materials used.

“Well yeah, basically, Japanese swords could be made from steel. This steel is carbon steel, harder than iron. The carbon content changes the hardness—”

“Ah, hold up! I won't get it even if you speak technical things.”

Serge's expertise only went into magic, and now that he had magic, it was hard for him to study systematically. Referencing the magic book he got in the labyrinth, he would ask Lulu and Ria things he didn't know, covering over the scientific knowledge of his previous life.

As expected of someone who loved games, books, and anime in their previous life, even though he knew the charm of Japanese swords, he didn't know much about them.

“I should be able to make something like carbon based iron, titanium, and chromium...”

Grumbling, Ria returned to making katanas.

The journey continued smoothly.

Being attacked by demons daily and repelling them each time, their levels increased.

As for whose increased the most, that would be Maal who was skilled in spirit magic.

The enemy was cut up by wind magic, pierced by earth magic, burned by fire magic, and frozen by ice magic.

Fuzzier than the usual organized magics, it was easy to use. Though it was called spirit magic, it was definitely different from magic, and would have been better called a spirit technique.

Serge also became skilled in magic.

Though he originally specialized in space-time and fire magic, he studied physical magic and magic theory from Lulu. His other skills' levels also increased. His Gift of being naturally talented in magic was bearing fruits.

"At this rate, there'll be nothing left for me to teach you."

That could also be said for Lulu, her support magic was more effective and progressed faster. Actual experience from combat surpassed everything.

The warriors that made up the front line also had their levels increase. Especially Carlos, becoming familiar with the cursed sword, he could stare at his blade absent-mindedly, becoming closer to the likes of Ria.

Since the warhammer that Gig had been using so far had become light, he had Ria create something that was heavier.

"I didn't think about it when you got it, but genesis magic is convenient."

Even when they fought Cordova's army at the village, they would have been at a handicap if it hadn't been for the large amount of spears. During this journey as well, she'd created many original katanas.

If it wasn't too large, made of magic, or contain complex mechanisms it could be produced.

She replaced the plain coach's axle with one made of metal, attaching a spring turned out to be a big success. Despite being called weapon creation, it seemed to be able to easily make metallic objects accurately.

Even so, Serge said he hadn't realized.

By the way, it took a lot of magical power to produce precious metals. It seemed that the rarer the metal, the more magical power needed to create it. Also for things other than metal like string and leather it took a large amount.

“Even so, we don’t need to worry about money anymore. Hey, wouldn’t it be a commotion if we don’t hide it?”

Though Serge said that, Ria didn’t think much about something like that. There were things like mithril and orichalcum, more valuable than gold, that she couldn’t create.

When she tried to make gold coins as an experiment, she was easily able to make Casalia’s solid gold coins. Even without knowing its composition, she could make it much more easily than katanas.

“If we accumulate money like this, couldn’t you get a good katana?”

“If it could be solved with money, I would’ve done so from the start. There’re few blacksmiths that make katanas to begin with.”

Casalia’s sword was basically a western-style sword. Though they had curved swords too, there were few that could be called katanas. Even if they had money, there were things they couldn’t buy.

“Speaking of katanas in this world, I wonder if there’s a country that uses a lot of them?”

Serge didn’t know about things like that. Ria had looked into it in the past, but despaired.

“The southern areas mainly. It’s something that came over from other continents. Their current katanas aren’t actually katanas, but curved swords.”

It was said that most of Krasli Kingdom’s were handed down from the far east areas. Curved swords had their own good points of course, and to some extent the technology extended into the continent, but its origin was still the southern part of the continent.

“Maybe you could ask a dwarf...”

There were dwarf villages in mountainous regions. Particularly the mountainous regions near Casalia, due to the high quality of ores, there were many dwarves living there.

The dwarves’ technology in metallurgy was disproportionate to the other races’. Much of the weapon treasures of Casalia’s royal family came from the dwarves’ hands.

Despite that, Ria’s favorite cross spear wasn’t a treasure made by dwarfs, but something she got from extorting her royal father.

There was a dwarf town nearby, but they would have to double back. It was a little troublesome.

“The dwarf city will be after the dark labyrinth. Before that, maybe we should head to Maal’s hometown...?”

Saying that, Ria felt a bit lonely. The end of the journey would mean parting with Maal. At the very least, Ria would keep her promise.

“I think it’s fine to wait until a bit later...”

Maal spoke from the driver’s seat. Serge was sitting next to her as he spoke with Ria.

“I will keep my promise. I won’t break it even if the other person says it’s fine.”

Despite being bought as a slave, in these several months Maal hadn’t felt like she was a slave. Even if she was teased, it was like an older sister doing so to a younger sister, you wouldn’t think of them as a vassal and princess.

“Ah, I see it.”

Serge spoke, cutting into the conversation.

After following the mountain pass’ road, at the foot of the steep mountain and on the side of the dark labyrinth was the last town.

Jaeburg. The road’s final stop. It had a population of approximately twenty thousand people with the majority depending on the labyrinth to make a living.

You would usually need to come to this city inside a caravan. Small groups heading all the way there like Ria’s would be filled with very competent people.

“For now, how about looking for an inn to take a bath?”

The group smiled wryly with Ria’s standard question.

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